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FORTUNE WEEKLY.

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY.

**AMONG THE MISSING
OR THE TREASURE OF THE SILVER CITY**

AND OTHER STORIES

By A Wolf-Made Man



As Professor Ogden and the two boys were examining the interior of the roofless room a sudden commotion arose above. The figure of a frightened boy came rushing toward the opening. He leaped down just as three natives appeared in pursuit.

Fame and Fortune Weekly

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY

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AMONG THE MISSING

—OR—

THE TREASURE OF THE SILVER CITY

By A SELF-MADE MAN

CHAPTER I.

THE SCHOONER IN THE CREEK.

"Say, Jack, it's getting dark," said Sam Thompson, stepping out of the cabin of the Sea Bird.

"I see it is," replied Jack Redding, who was steering the cat-boat.

"And the wind seems to be getting stronger every moment."

"Yes, it's blowing like fun."

"I don't believe we can beat back to the bay," said Sam, looking around on the foam-tipped billows of the Atlantic that were setting in toward the New Jersey coast line.

"I'll admit it's kind of doubtful."

"What are we going to do, then? The professor is all in. He's awfully sick."

"I was thinking of putting in to that creek yonder and tying up till the weather moderates, which probably won't be before morning."

"Do it. We can't afford to take any more chances out here. We are liable to be capsized at any moment."

"All right, old man," said Jack, altering the course of the little craft for the mouth of the creek in question; "but I'm afraid our folks will have a fit when we fail to show up for dinner. They know we went sailing right after lunch, and though they have a certain amount of confidence in our ability to handle the Sea Bird in a stiff wind, the weather has changed so much for the worse in the last hour or so that they are sure to feel worried over our absence."

"It can't be helped. It's better for them to worry over nothing than to give them the chance of planting us if we should be capsized and washed ashore."

"That's right. It would be a shame, too, for us to cause a vacancy in the Princeton University faculty, for the professor would share our fate."

"We'll never be able to entice him out again."

Jack laughed.

"I guess so. Hereafter he'll confine his aquatic pleasures to a rowboat on the lake. A burnt child always dreads the fire."

"I don't blame him," grinned Sam. "He looks terrible bad in there on the locker. He groans every time the boat pitches. His stomach must be in a fierce state. He's got my sympathy, for I remember when I felt that way myself."

"It won't take us long to reach the creek, and as soon as we're in there he'll recover from his misery."

"Have you any idea how far we are from home?"

"No, but I don't believe we're over four or five miles."

"If we could find out some place to moor the boat, one of us could walk home and let the folks know we're all right. The professor would be glad to go along if he's able."

"That isn't a bad idea. You can go if you want to. I'd just as soon stay aboard all night. There's enough food in the cupboard to carry me over till morning. You could come back before breakfast and we'd sail back in perhaps half an hour."

"But we've got to find out first where we are after reaching the creek. I don't intend starting off in the dark without knowing where I'm going to fetch up. Neither am I going to tramp nine or ten miles in the night. The distance has got to be short, three or four miles, or I'll stay by the boat."

The two boys belonged to New York and were staying with their parents at adjoining cottages at a New Jersey summer resort called Topsail Beach.

Their companion, Professor Ogden, a man of fifty years, connected with Princeton, was boarding with the Redding family, under a special arrangement which embraced the coaching of the two boys in the subjects they would encounter at their examination that fall when they entered the university.

They had just graduated from a semi-military academy and were in the pink of mental training for a college course.

The professor told their parents that there was little doubt of their passing the required examination with flying colors.

Two hours each morning except Saturday and Sunday were devoted to study with the professor, while they had their afternoons free.

Half of their time they spent in the catboat, sailing up and down the shore, for they were enthusiastic and capable young boatmen.

That afternoon they had persuaded the professor to go along with them.

As the weather was pleasant at that time, he consented to accompany them.

They ran well out on the ocean in a diagonal line with the shore, and had secured an offing of five or six miles, and were twice that distance from the bay whence they had started, when the weather suddenly changed.

When they came about they had to beat back against the wind, which was an off-shore one.

The slant of the wind prevented a direct course for the bay, and they were obliged to adopt a long and then a short "leg" to fetch it.

After covering half the distance the wind shifted, making it advisable to run straight for the shore, with short tacks to help them in the direction they wanted to go.

By the time they got close in the wind had shifted clear around to the southeast, which was unfavorable to them, and was blowing half a gale.

Long before that Professor Ogden had succumbed to the mal de mere, and he grew worse with the weather until now he was a truly pitiable object.

The sun, which was not due to set for some time yet, was lost behind the clouds and the ocean mist that was driving in from the sea.

The sorry-looking firmament caused a premature gloom to fall upon sea and shore, turning the water to a lead color.

The Sea Bird was a tight little craft, and as Jack, who was at the tiller, handled her in ship-shape style, she rode the surges like a real sea bird; but for all that the situation of the three aboard was one of peril, for if the strained mast snapped, or something else went wrong with them, they stood every chance of capsizing, and that would have been fatal to them under the conditions.

It was providential that the wide creek was near at hand.

Once in there, they would be safe, and snug as well.

To make it, however, they had to take the full force of the wind on their port side, and though the mainsail was doubly reefed, and Jack favored the little craft as much as he could, she heeled over alarmingly, taking the water in constantly over her starboard side.

It was like driving an automobile at a high speed along the foot of a bank by the side of the road to avoid a procession of passing cars or other vehicles, with the chance of turning turtle if something gave way.

It was rather exciting while it lasted, and the boys were not sorry that it was soon over.

The boat dashed into the creek, like a skimming sea gull, and shot up the narrowing and winding stream, losing speed as she went.

The creek lost itself in a thick wood, which broke the force of the sweeping wind, and the little craft finished her way on an even keel.

The trees were so numerous and tall that the boys found themselves in a deepening twilight.

It was a lonesome and apparently deserted place.

Under the gloom of a darkening sky, with the wind whistling through the branches and howling above the tree-tops, and the drum-roll of the surf on the shore behind, the situation was not particularly exhilarating.

"I'm mighty glad we're out of it and right side up," said Sam. "Where shall we land?"

"We'll let her run as far as she'll go and then tie up," replied Jack.

"She won't go much further than around the turn yonder. I'm thinking we won't find anybody in this neighborhood to hand us our bearings."

"Looks that way, for it's about as lonely a spot as I've ever seen."

"Oh, well, what's the difference? We can stay here all night. The gale will blow itself out before morning, and we'll be able to get home in time for breakfast."

"We should have a good appetite for it, for we'll have to make our dinner off crackers and cheese, and a couple of boxes of sardines."

"The professor won't deprive us of any of it, I guess. It will take him some little time to come around. However, he'll make up for it when he gets his legs under your breakfast table."

"Hello, I hear voices," said Jack, suddenly.

"So do I," said Sam. "Several of them."

"And the creaking of blocks, too. Sounds as if a gang of men were at work."

"I see a light shining through the bushes."

"Two lights," said Jack.

"Three of them. One higher than the others. What are we up against?"

"Nothing very alarming, I guess, though it does seem incomprehensible under the circumstances."

Then the little boat swung around the turn and the boys saw the outline of a black schooner before them, moored close in shore, and the focus of a crowd of busy men who were loading a lot of boxes and other things aboard of her.

It was a strange place for a vessel to be taking on a cargo, and small wonder if the two boys were greatly astonished at the sight.

Before they could exchange any comments on the subject, their coming was discovered by a watcher on the bow of the vessel, and that individual uttered a shout that seemed intended as a warning to all the others, and the work in hand came to a sudden stoppage, and several men ran down to the water's edge to look at the new arrivals.

CHAPTER II. CARRIED TO SEA.

The Sea Bird neared the shore of the creek under the slight momentum that still propelled her laggingly forward.

Two of the men waded into the water, seized her stubby bowsprit and dragged her up to the sandy shore.

Then they swung her broadside on.

A lantern was flashed in the faces of the two boys standing in the cockpit.

A broad-shouldered, bewhiskered man in a peajacket pushed his way to the water's edge, and after surveying the new arrivals, said, in foghorn tones:

"Who are you, and what brings you here at this hour?"

"I'm Jack Redding, and this is my friend, Sam Thompson," said Jack.

"Redding!" ejaculated the whiskered man. "Any connection of John Redding, Naval Officer of the Port of New York?"

"He's my father," answered Jack.

A muttered oath came from the lips of the man.

"What are you doing down here?"

Jack explained the circumstances which had compelled them to put into the creek.

"Just so," said the man, curtly, "you are living somewhere along the coast at present."

"Oh, yes. My folks and Tompson's are passing the summer at Topsail Beach. Perhaps you can tell us how far this creek is from there?"

The man eyed him without replying.

Finally he found his tongue and said:

"Now that you've come into the creek, what are you going to do here?"

"What can we do but stay here till it quits blowing. That will probably be all night. Got any objection to our company?"

The whiskered man glared at him, for Jack's final sentence was spoken rather sarcastically.

"Come ashore!" he said, abruptly.

"What for? We're comfortable enough here. You seem to be busy loading that schooner with goods. Don't let us stop you. Go right on with your work."

"Come ashore!" roared the man, aggressively.

"Look here, who gave you authority to order us about?" said Jack, angrily.

"Drag them out of that boat," ordered the man.

Two of the bunch laid hands on Jack and yanked him struggling out of the Sea Bird.

Two others jumped into the catboat and compelled Sam to follow.

By the whispered man's orders the mooring line of the little craft was made fast to a tree.

"What do you mean by treating us this way?" cried Jack, mad as a hornet over the way he and Sam were handled. "Who are you, anyway, and what are you doing here in this creek?"

"Take them aboard and lock them up in the sail room," ordered the whiskered man, who was evidently the boss of the crew.

Judging from the nautical flavor which pervaded his person, he was probably the skipper of the black schooner.

Jack and Sam put up a vigorous opposition to the orders of the whiskered man, but not the slightest attention was paid to their protests.

They were forced on board of the schooner, and presently found themselves prisoners in a small stateroom containing a couple of bunks and a pile of sailcloth.

"This is a pretty how-de-do," snorted Jack, whose anger was at white heat.

"I should say so," said Sam, in a grouchy tone. "One would think those chaps were pirates the way they handled us. There's something shady going on, take it from me, for this is no place to take cargo on a vessel. I'd like to know what's in the wind."

"Let's try and kick the door down," said Jack, giving it a whack with his foot that made it shake on its hinges.

Their efforts to dislocate the door, however, did not meet with striking success, and they quit assaulting it.

As there was precious little room to stand in, they sat upon the pile of sailcloth and continued to express their sentiments in no undecided way.

They could hear the creaking of pulley blocks and the occasional thud of a heavy object as it struck the combing of the hatchway on its downward flight into the hold.

They wondered what kind of cargo was being taken aboard, and why it was necessary for the vessel to be loaded in that out-of-the-way spot.

"By jove, I believe I have it," said Sam in some excitement.

"Let's hear what you've got," said Jack.

"It's a wonder you never thought of it."

"Never mind that. Let's hear what brilliant discovery your mighty brain has given birth to."

"I can't tell you in one word."

"Why don't you?"

"Contraband."

"Ha!" cried Jack, a light breaking across his mind. "Do you think—"

"I do. I'll bet all I possess that this is a filibustering expedition. This vessel is loading with arms and munitions of war for Cuba."

As the date of this story was toward the end of the last century, when the Cubans, led by Gomez and Maceo, were waging their final rebellion against the tyranny of Spain, the reader will understand what Sam Thompson meant.

There was much filibustering at that time out of American ports, if certain secluded creeks and inlets from New York down to the tip end of Florida could be considered as ports of shipment.

The American navy was on the lookout for them to prevent them getting away with their illicit cargoes, while the Spanish fleet, patrolling Cuban waters, was watching for them in that direction.

In the first case a Federal prison awaited them if nabbed with the goods, and in the second, if the Spaniards intercepted them they were handled without gloves.

The Cuban Junta, therefore, was careful to select only men of approved nerve and ability to carry the cargoes they provided.

These cargoes were always conveyed to some lonesome inlet on the coast, there to await the coming of the vessel, usually an ocean-going tug, or some other craft propelled by steam, for a sailing vessel had no chance against a Spanish cruiser.

Occasionally, though, a sailing craft was intrusted with the ticklish work when steamers were not to be had when urgently wanted; that is how it came about that the fast schooner Albatros, Captain Jenkins, happened to be on the job in the little secluded New Jersey creek when the afternoon gale drove the Sea Bird to take shelter there.

"That's why we have been handled so roughly," said Jack. "That chap with the whiskers is doubtless the captain, and he has locked us up in this room to prevent us from sneaking off in the darkness and betraying what is going on in the creek, which probably isn't a great way from Topsail Beach."

"No doubt about it," said Sam. "But they needn't to have gone to all that trouble, for we wouldn't have given them away. I am in sympathy with the Cuban cause."

"So am I."

"The skipper might have treated us more decently but for the fact that your father is the Naval Officer of the Port of New York. You admitted that fact to him when your name attracted his attention, and he asked you if you were any connection of John Redding. He figured that the moment you met your father you would tell him about seeing a schooner loading with cases in this creek, and that your father would understand in a moment what was going on, and take steps to either catch the vessel before she got away or afterwards on the way down the coast. Being a sailing craft, it would be impossible for her to elude a fast Government cutter having her description."

"I see," replied Jack. "Under such circumstances I forgive whiskers for the strenuous treatment we've undergone at his hands. Now if we could only send him word that the expedition is safe as far as we are concerned, maybe we would be allowed a little more freedom. The stateroom is awfully stuffy, and I'd like to get out of it."

"So would I. Go and knock on the door and see if you can get in communication with somebody."

Jack did so, but nobody came.

In fact, there seemed to be nobody around the little passage off which the room was, and which ran from the cabin against the bulkhead beyond which was the hold.

The hold also extended under that part of the vessel to within a foot or so of the stern, as it also extended forward under the quarters occupied by the crew and the galley or cook's domain.

The boys could hear the work going on outside and in the hold, but if any one heard the sounds they made in the room they paid no attention to them.

An hour passed and then they heard sounds in the other direction—that is, aft in the cabin.

They recognized the foghorn voice of the skipper, and presently they were convinced that the person he was talking to was Professor Ogden.

"The professor has recovered from his illness," said Jack. "While he remained in the cabin of the Sea Bird he was over-

locked by the bunch of filibusters, but when he felt able to show himself in the cockpit to find out where the catboat was and what had become of us, they took notice of him, and the skipper diplomatically invited him aboard the schooner, and probably intends to keep him in the cabin until the vessel is ready to leave, when he will doubtless release the three of us with apologies for having shown so much interest in us."

That's the way Jack summed up the situation, but he didn't hit it quite right, as events proved.

"I think you'd better make another effort to attract attention, Jack," said Sam. "The skipper will hear you if you pound hard enough, and if he condescends to notice us we may be able to convince him that we are friends and have no intention of giving him or his enterprise away."

So Jack pounded vigorously on the door, repeating his knocks at intervals, but the captain didn't come.

He simply walked to the open door of the little passage and closed it, shutting off the sounds made by Jack, and thereafter preventing the boys from hearing the voices in the cabin.

The sudden cessation of the voices caused the lads to believe that the skipper and the professor had left the cabin.

"Too bad," said Sam, "the skipper didn't remain long enough to hear your pounding. I guess we'll have to stay here until we are liberated. That may not happen for some time. It must be seven or eight o'clock by this, and I'm mighty hungry."

"I'm rather famished myself," said Jack. "This is a kind of adventure that I don't fancy."

"Well, it isn't as bad as being tossed about outside on the ocean with more than one chance of going to the bottom."

"At any rate, the professor is all right again, and the skipper will doubtless treat him with the most distinguished consideration, for he isn't quite as dangerous, you know, as a couple of boys like ourselves, one of whom is intimately related to the Naval Officer of the Port."

Jack chuckled as he spoke, and tried to put the best face on their uncomfortable situation.

Thus another hour passed away, and then there was a change of things.

The creaking of the blocks, the shouts of men, and the jarring of cases dropped into place in the hold ceased.

The rumbling and bang of the heavy hatch cover as it was pushed into place followed.

"They've got all the cargo on board," said Sam. "We may look to be released presently, for the vessel will probably put to sea right away. Chaps accustomed to taking desperate chances don't mind a little thing like a stiff gale when they've got a well-built schooner under them and are numerous enough to maneuver her."

"I'm glad they've finished up, and the sooner they get ready to sail the sooner they'll get rid of us," said Jack.

That the crew were probably preparing to sail was evidenced by the running to and fro on the deck above, and the creaking of the blocks as they hoisted the big sails.

The boys judged that they would not be turned loose till the last moment, and that moment appeared to be rapidly approaching.

Sail having been spread on the schooner, three boats were got out with a tow-line to propel the vessel down the creek to a point where she would come within the influence of the wind.

The motion the boats imparted to the schooner was so slight that the boys did not know that she had left her moorings until the vessel was out from behind the shelter of the trees, then they became aware that she was no longer stationary.

In a few minutes the boats were called in, the sails trimmed to the gale that was still sweeping in from the ocean, and the filibuster slipped out of the creek on to the turbulent billows.

CHAPTER III.

ON BOARD A FILIBUSTER.

"Oh, I say, what does this mean?" cried Sam Thompson, as they heard the roar of the surf plain, and the first puff of sea air careened the schooner slightly.

"Search me!" said Jack. "It looks as if the vessel has been hauled down the creek without our being aware of the fact."

"That's what she has. But why haven't we been released?" said Sam, in some excitement.

"The skipper must have overlooked us in the rush of getting the schooner under way."

"But when he put the professor on shore he couldn't help remembering us."

At that moment the vessel shot out into the sea and heeled

over with a suddenness that threw the two boys sprawling over the spare canvas.

Then she rolled the other way as the big booms were swung to the leeward and the schooner was brought upon her course, which was straight off shore.

Sam was half frantic with excitement and anxiety.

There could be no doubt that they were being carried off in the vessel.

"Smash down the doors!" he cried. "We must get out of this. We must demand to be put on shore. This sort of business is an outrage."

"We have tried to break open the door, but it didn't work," replied Jack, as he tried to steady himself to the roll and plunge of the schooner. "If we failed when the vessel was steady, we certainly can't do it now."

"But we're being carried to sea."

"That's evident, but I don't see that we can do anything about it," said Jack, who was something of a philosopher.

"But we must do something about it," cried Sam. "This vessel is bound for Cuba and the skipper intends to run the coast blockade and land his cargo on the beach somewhere within hail of the Cubans, who will be on the watch for her coming. Do you understand that?"

Sam roared the words at his companion with excited energy.

"I take it for granted you are right in your surmise," replied Jack, coolly. "I don't see that you are gaining anything by going off your bean about it."

"Do you want to go to Cuba in this craft?"

"No, I am not anxious to, but if the skipper carries us there against our will, what can we do about it?"

"He has no right to run away with us. It's criminal abduction, and he can be punished for it."

"Sure he can if the law is put on him after he gets back to the States. How do you know but he hopes to sight a pilot boat and send us aboard of her?"

"He could do that, I suppose," said Sam, calming down suddenly under the idea.

"If he failed to meet a pilot boat he is quite liable to run across a fruitier or some other craft bound for New York, and if he intends to tranship us, that will be his chance."

"If he does that I won't kick, for I don't care how I get back as long as I do get back."

"Same here. Say, if we were not used to being knocked around on the water, how sick we'd be about this time."

"I'll bet we would. The professor ought to be aboard now. He'd get a taste of the real thing."

"How do you know he isn't?"

Sam stared through the darkness at his companion.

Such a possibility had not occurred to him.

"The skipper wouldn't carry him off," he said, though his tone was doubtful.

"Why wouldn't he? If his purpose was to suppress all news concerning the schooner's presence and object in the creek, he wouldn't let Professor Ogden return to Topsail Beach, where he would probably find his way in the morning, to inform our folks of our mysterious disappearance. Doubtless he learned from the professor that he was stopping at our cottage, and he knows what would likely happen the moment my father learned the facts of the case."

"Then you think the professor is aboard?"

"I think it's a safe bet he is."

"Then I feel sorry for him."

At that moment there was the sound of steps outside in the passage, and presently the door was thrown open and a lantern flashed in their faces.

The boys blinked, like a couple of bats, at the light.

For all that they made out that it was the whiskered man who stood in the opening—the man they believed to be the skipper.

"Well, how are you faring, you two? Seasick?" said the fog-horn voice.

"Not by a jugful," returned Jack. "Are you going to let us out of this?"

"Not to-night. What's the use, you'd only be in the way. You've got a couple of berths you can turn into, and when morning comes—"

"Are you the captain of this schooner?"

"I'm the cap'n."

"Then perhaps you'll let us know why you've carried us off in this outrageous way? Don't you know it's against the law to kidnap people?"

"When people run foul of what don't concern them they often get into trouble."

"I told you what brought us into the creek."

"I know you did, and I believe you; but it was unfortunate

for you that you were obliged to put in at that particular place."

"Yes, I guess it was; but it would have been more unfortunate if our boat had capsized outside and we had gone to the bottom."

"Haven't you guessed by this time what this craft is?"

"We've a pretty good idea, for we read the papers and know what's going on."

"What do you think this schooner is, then?"

"A filibuster, carrying arms, munitions of war and other stuff intended for the Cubans," said Jack, boldly.

"You've guessed it; and now do you wonder that you're aboard?"

"You were afraid we'd tell all about what we saw in the creek as soon as we got back to Topsail Beach?"

"Exactly. And as your father is Naval Officer of the Port of New York, and he's at the Beach, probably you can guess what's the first thing he'd do."

"I suppose he'd feel it to be his duty to notify the proper quarter, and a revenue cutter, or some other steamer, would be sent out to try and head you off."

"Precisely. That is just what he'd do. The Government is hot after the contraband business, for the Cuban Junta has been so successful in getting the sinews of war to their compatriots that the Spanish Government is continually protesting. Now you understand the situation. I have nothing against you lads, or your professor, but—"

"You've got Professor Ogden aboard, too?"

"I have. I couldn't afford to take any chances. This is a hazardous game at both ends; but there's big money in it when you pull the trick, and I've a wife and family to support."

"I don't blame you, captain; but you've gained the same result by taking us into your confidence instead of handling us as though we were a pair of crooks. Sam and I sympathize with the Cuban cause, and we wouldn't have opened our mouths to stop you from getting your cargo to the island. We would have seen to it that the professor had nothing to say, either, whatever his sentiments may be on the subject. That's the truth, whether you believe me or not."

"I'm willing to believe you, but it wouldn't have altered the programme a bit. In a desperate game people's words don't count for much. There's a heap of responsibility resting on me. General Maximo Gomez and a force of Cubans will have word of my coming in time to be on the lookout for the schooner, and they need the stuff badly enough. It would be a burning shame to disappoint them. So you see that in a case of this kind one can't afford to trust even his brother," said the skipper.

"Well, how far do you intend to carry us?"

"You've got to go the limit."

"Are you going to carry us to the island?"

"I'll have to. If the job goes through all right I'll fetch you back and trust to your honor not to inform on me."

"But suppose you're captured by a Spanish cruiser?"

"Then we'll all be shot, though I'll do my best to save you lads and the professor by representing how you happen to be aboard."

"That's pleasant, I must say. If it was any other nation but the Spaniards, I wouldn't care so much, but they've got it in for the filibusters, and they are not likely to listen to explanations. I suppose you're not armed?"

"I have a bunch of Remington rifles, one for every man aboard, but they wouldn't count for much if a gunboat, let alone a cruiser, got us in range. We have half a dozen cases of nitro-glycerine in the hold, more than enough to blow us to perdition if a shot jostled one of them."

"Holy mackerel!" gasped Sam, turning a bit white.

Jack drew a long breath.

"I begin to see our finish if there's any hitch in this expedition," he said. "You'll never be able to run away from a cruiser if one sights you. What's the idea of the Junta putting a schooner like this on so ticklish a job?"

"The last ocean-going tug that went over from Florida was shot full of holes before she could land her stuff, and steamers suitable for the enterprise are scarce, so they had to take a chance on this craft. She has one advantage, and that is the Dons are not looking for a sailing craft to run the blockade. It looks too foolish. I'm flying the American flag and carrying a cargo that looks innocent enough on the outside. I have clearance papers for Kingston, Jamaica. If I'm held up by a cruiser and an officer boards me, I hope to squeeze through, for a number of the top cases easiest to be reached will stand examination. I'm up to all the tricks of the trade. A man has got to be when he's carrying his life in his hands."

"Well, captain, I suppose there isn't any use of us squealing. You've put the matter squarely before us, and we've got to stand for it."

"That's right," nodded the skipper, making a move to go. "I suppose you don't mind doing us a favor?"

"What is it?"

"We haven't ate anything since one o'clock, and we're mighty hungry. Couldn't you send us something to eat before we turn in?"

"Follow me to the cabin and I'll see what I can do for you."

They wobbled along after the skipper and took their seats at the narrow table under the skylight.

It was a smoky looking place that cabin, with an entire absence of gingerbread ornamentation, and was lighted by a swinging lamp.

The skipper got them some meat and bread, which they ate with a relish, and washed it down with a drink of water.

They could have eaten a lot more, but had to be satisfied with that.

After getting away with it they went back to the sail room and turned in for the night.

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE CUBAN SHORE.

When the boys turned out next morning and entered the cabin they found it more cheerful looking than the night before.

The sun was shining across the skylight and reflected down upon the tray of glasses swinging underneath.

The vessel no longer pitched about like a skittish colt cavorting about a meadow, but was dipping and rolling in a rhythmic way under the influence of a strong breeze.

The gale had blown itself out during the night, and the schooner was bowing along at what the boys found to be a comfortable gait.

A negro was setting the table, which was not smooth like ordinary tables, but fitted with small cleats to hold the plates and dishes from sliding off on to the floor, or into one's lap when seated at it.

The colored man grinned at the boys and asked them how they felt.

He was a West Indian whose grandparents had been victims of what was called the middle passage; that is, they were brought to the West Indies from Africa in a slave ship, and sold, as was the custom in those days.

"First rate considering what we're up against," replied Jack, cheerfully.

"You no look white under de gills dis mornin'. Make good sailor man."

"Oh, we're used to the water."

"De old man dat come 'board wid you him berry sick dis mornin'. Look like him give up de ghost. But him come 'round all right in lillie bit time."

"Where is he?"

"Him in dat stateroom. 'Pose you get um lillie piece fat pork from cookie and hold um under him nose. Dat mighty fine cure," and the West Indian grinned all over his face.

Jack opened the stateroom door and looked in on Professor Ogden.

He found the old gentleman asleep, and did not disturb him.

He looked white and wan after his experience in the Sea Bird, and afterward on the schooner.

A spell on deck in the sunshine would pull him together and give him some appetite for dinner.

The captain had given orders for some broth to be prepared for his breakfast, as it wasn't likely he'd be able to take anything more substantial.

"He's asleep," said Jack to his companion. "Let's go on deck."

A narrow brass-bound flight of stairs took them up to the after-deck, where a horny-handed and weather-beaten sailor was standing at the steering wheel, with the binnacle containing the compass protected with a brass hood, facing him.

He squirted a stream of tobacco juice to the leeward, and eyed the two boys curiously.

A couple of dark-skinned piratical-looking seamen were lounging forward, wearing Scotch caps.

Smoke was coming out of the galley stove pipe, flattened down by the breeze.

The sky was almost cloudless, the sun large and fiery above the horizon, and not a vestige of land, or a sail, or the smoke of a steamer, in sight.

The schooner was the only object in all that vast expanse of water.

"Where's the skipper?" Jack asked the helmsman.

"Hain't turned out yet," was the reply. "The mate went into the galley a few moments ago. There he is now."

A mass of sandy hair surmounted by a nautical-looking cap was emerging from a hole in the deck forward.

A pair of broad shoulders, a heavy body, enveloped in a pea jacket, and two bulky legs followed.

After a glance around, the mate turned aft.

He saw the boys and came toward them.

"Well, my hearties," he said, with a grin, "you seem to have your sea legs on this morning. I guess you've been at sea before."

"We've often been on the sea within sight of the New Jersey coast, but we've never been out of sight of the States before," answered Jack.

"The old man had a talk with you last night, I guess."

"Are you referring to the professor? If you are, then you are wrong about our talking with him. I had a look at him in his berth a while ago, but he was asleep."

"I meant the cap'n."

"Oh! Yes, we had a talk with him last night, and he explained the situation. He told us we'd have to go to Cuba with the schooner, if she's fortunate enough to get there. The idea doesn't suit us much, and it certainly will cause a howl from the professor, but I suppose we can't help ourselves."

"It will be a brand-new experience for you."

"We don't doubt that; but think of the feelings of our folks, who are ignorant of our whereabouts. They'll conclude that we were lost in the gale."

"The shore will be searched for traces of you and your sailboat will be found, right side up and moored to a tree. That will be evidence showing you were not drowned."

"That's true; but it won't explain what has become of us."

"You'll be back in a couple of weeks if the expedition is successful. Then the old man will land you at Key West or Tampa, and give you money to pay your way back by rail."

"That will be all right if things turn out that way; but suppose this vessel is blown up by a Spanish cruiser, for the captain told us there are several cases of nitro-glycerine aboard which the concussion of a shot is likely to explode?"

"In that case you stand the same chance as the rest of us."

"You people are getting big pay for risking your lives, while we are obliged to face the same chances for nothing."

"It happens to be your luck to get yourselves in this scrape."

At that point Captain Jenkins showed himself.

He wished the boys good-morning, passed a few words with them, and then the West Indian called them to breakfast.

After the meal the captain went on deck and relieved the mate, while the boys went into the professor's stateroom to see him.

Professor Ogden welcomed the boys in a solemn way.

The situation had been explained to him by the captain, and he viewed the immediate future with considerable apprehension.

He was fully informed as to the state of things in Cuba, and he knew that the Spanish navy was maintaining a close watch along the coast to catch the filibustering expeditions that were using every kind of device to land armed Cubans from the States, and arms and ammunition for the benefit of the insurgents.

He could not see what show a sailing vessel had in the desperate game, and fully expected that the schooner and all on board would meet with a tragic end.

The three talked the matter over for a while then, and as the professor felt better he was persuaded to get up and go on deck, where he would be benefited by the breeze.

Captain Jenkins seemed to have a pretty good idea where he might run across an American naval vessel, and he kept well out to sea.

Thus the days passed, the schooner being favored with fine weather, until she got down among the Bahamas.

Ostensibly bound for Kingston, Jamaica, the Albatross was headed through the Windward Passage, with the American flag flying from her gaff.

A special landing place had been selected for her by the Junta, and General Gomez had been advised of the spot, and when he might look for the schooner to appear off a certain little bay, backed by a mountain range, on the southern side of Cuba.

This wasn't Captain Jenkins' first trip as a filibuster, and he knew what signal to display in the night, if the coast appeared to be clear, and what meaning to attach to the answering signal.

The detachment of insurgents waiting to receive the schooner's cargo was expected to be fully informed as to the state of things in the immediate vicinity of the bay.

It would be impossible for those aboard of the little vessel to detect a gunboat or a cruiser lying close inside either arm of the bay until they passed the entrance.

Captain Jenkins looked to his Cuban friends to prevent him from falling into such a trap.

A whole lot depended on their watchfulness.

After hitting the entrance to the Windward Passage a sharp watch was maintained forward, for there was every chance of a Spanish war vessel turning up at any moment.

She might come out from the Cuban coast to investigate the schooner if the commander thought the Albatross looked suspicious to him.

Nothing of that sort happened, however, and the day passed serenely enough.

Jack and Sam were worked up to a pitch of nervous excitement, for they knew that the crisis of the expedition was close at hand, while the professor sat silent and solemn on deck, under the awning, and wondered what the next few hours would bring forth.

With the setting of the sun the schooner was off the southeastern point of the big island, with a clear sea around.

It now became necessary to keep away from the proper course to Kingston, and when the captain gave the steersman his orders, the ticklish part of the trip was really begun.

When the sun went down, darkness fell almost immediately, but the darkness was not of the intense kind, for the sky was bright with stars.

Thus objects could be seen at quite a distance.

Because of such a contingency the sails of the Albatross had been stained a dirty lead color, which rendered them difficult to distinguish at night.

A moving steamer could be seen against the coast line with a night glass, even if she showed no light.

The schooner kept to her altered course, which would fetch her abreast of the bay, but many miles off, about eleven or twelve that night.

In the stiff wind that was blowing the captain expected to fetch the entrance of the bay an hour later.

Jack and Sam, as they paced the deck together, watched the long, low, dark blot which they knew was Cuba, with anxious eyes.

They strained their gaze to the east and then to the west for signs of a steamer, but could see nothing that indicated one.

Professor Ogdern had resumed his seat.

Whatever his feelings were he kept them to himself.

As time passed the Albatross edged closer to the coast to enable Captain Jenkins to get the bearings of the bay he had been directed to reach.

It was half-past eleven by the little clock in the cabin when the skipper discovered the landmarks indicating the location of the bay.

His night-glass showed no signs of Spanish blockading craft cruising in that neighborhood.

If one was in the vicinity she was hidden in the bay, and behind the shadow of a projecting point of the coast.

As far as the skipper could make out, everything was favorable to make the landing.

The final outcome of the game was now up to the Cubans.

The schooner's head was swung around and she was headed shoreward.

It was now do or die, for no excuse would now prevail if they were overhauled.

"We are in it up to our necks now, Sam," said Jack.

"We certainly are. The captain says there's nothing in sight that looks like the enemy, and that if when he gets close in he received a reassuring answer to his signal, the job will go through all right. I hope it will. I won't feel easy until we are out of this wasp nest with an empty hold," replied Sam.

The schooner was nearing the coast at a ten-mile gait, which would bring her close in within half an hour.

Soon the mountains loomed up like gigantic shadows, and the shore itself grew more distinct.

The thirty minutes passed and the bay entrance lay full before them.

"Things are going fine," said Jack. "Not a cruiser or gunboat in sight."

"There may be one hiding in the bay," said Sam.

"The skipper is going to signal the Cuban detachment. We shall soon know if the coast is as clear as it appears to be."

A sailor was climbing the rigging of the schooner's foremast with two covered lanterns—one white and the other red.

When the man had reached his perch the skipper pulled out his watch.

The sailor flashed the white light above the red and then covered the lights.

Captain Jenkins waited till three minutes had elapsed, and shouted to the sailor.

The signal lights were flashed again.

The expected answer came in the gloom of the mountain side—a white light shone above a red.

"All's serene," said the captain, in a tone of satisfaction, and he ordered the schooner, which had been hove to, put on her way again.

In a few minutes the Albatross shot like a phantom craft between the shadowy headlands that marked the entrance to the bay.

The silence was profound.

Not a sound came from the schooner, save the low swish of the water as it was brushed aside by the vessel's prow.

All the blocks had been well greased, and the ropes slipped through them without a squeak.

The Albatross glided across the small bay and dropped anchor off a patch of white beach.

While in transit the hatch was removed and the hoisting gear rigged in position.

Four surf boats had been brought along to take part in the landing, and these were quietly got into the water and quickly loaded with cases.

Then manned by a part of the schooner's crew, they started for the beach.

Apparently the expedition was a great success.

CHAPTER V.

AT BELIZE.

The boys were delighted at the state of affairs.

The peril they had anticipated had not materialized.

The schooner had reached her destination without hindrance, and in a short time would be rid of her dangerous cargo.

Then she would start for Florida, and with nothing contraband aboard could not be molested by any Spanish vessel she might encounter.

Eager to hasten the work to completion, the boys approached the skipper.

"If you can use any more help, captain," said Jack, "we're ready to give you a hand."

"Jump down into the hold, then, and make yourselves useful," was the reply.

There were lively times aboard the vessel for the next hour, and there were lively times on shore, for the Cuban detachment had come on the scene with wagons to transport the cargo to their camp.

As the last case was hoisted out of the hold, Jack and Sam scrambled up on deck with thankful hearts.

They felt as though a great load was off their minds as they watched the last boat depart for the shore.

The schooner was empty of its contraband stuff.

Nothing remained in her hold save a dozen small cases containing innocent goods which had been fetched along to serve as a blind in case the vessel was overhauled by a Spanish war craft.

The hatch was clapped on and fastened down, the boats hauled aboard, the sails hoisted, the anchor hove short, and the Albatross headed for the entrance of the bay.

She passed out into the Caribbean Sea, and the skipper laid her course for Jamaica, intending to try and secure a cargo of some kind for the States, or failing in that to load up with ballast, for in her present condition she was too light to encounter a gale with safety.

It was after three in the morning, but the two boys did not turn in until the coast of the Queen of the Antilles had become a mere blur upon the horizon.

They did not tumble out until close to noon, when the schooner was almost in sight of the northern coast line of Jamaica.

They ate a hearty meal with exuberant spirits.

The filibustering expedition had been a complete success, and they were glad they had been compelled to take part in it.

What a story they would have to tell when they got back home!

They figured it would add somewhat to their importance when they made their entrance into college.

The only damper on their enjoyment now was the reflection that their parents were greatly distressed and mystified by their unexplained disappearance.

But they took comfort from the captain's assurance that he would soon land them where they could secure railroad passage back to their starting point.

At three that afternoon the Albatross dropped anchor in a Jamaican port, and Captain Jenkins went ashore to bluff the officials and then see what he could do about a return cargo.

He returned about supper time and told his mate that the best he could do was to get a lading for Belize in British Honduras.

He had decided to take it, and in the morning the schooner would be hauled alongside a wharf and loaded.

The boys knew that Belize was the principal city and port of British Honduras, and they were not sorry to be afforded the opportunity to look it over.

Besides teeming with tropical productions, Belize exported mahogany, cedar, sarsaparilla, logwood, fustic and other dye woods.

Captain Jenkins thought he might be able to get a cargo there for New York.

In that event he wouldn't put in at any Florida port to tranship the boys and the professor, but carry them back with him, as he figured that a few days more or less would not greatly matter with them.

The boys enjoyed a run ashore with the professor while the schooner was taking on her cargo, and on the second day after their arrival the Albatross set sail westward across the Caribbean Sea.

With easy winds, and a continuation of the fair weather they had been favored with since running out of the gale which had marked their start from the creek, the boys enjoyed every minute of the quick run to the British port.

After the customary formalities had been gone through with, the schooner was hauled in alongside a wharf and arrangements made to unload the cargo.

"As there is no saying how long we'll remain here, I move we start out right after dinner and have a look at the town," said Jack, addressing Professor Ogden, quite certain that Sam would back up his proposition.

"Second the motion," said Sam, promptly.

"Very well," answered the professor, "you boys might as well see all you can of this part of the world, for you may never have another opportunity to visit it."

Captain Jenkins had been in Belize before, and he posted his three passengers about the place.

He said they needn't hurry their sight-seeing, as in all probability the schooner would remain a week in port.

"All right, Cap.," said Jack; "we'll take in a part of the town this afternoon, and continue the job to-morrow."

Accordingly, after dinner, Jack, Sam and the professor left the schooner on their sight-seeing expedition.

There was much to interest the boys at least in the strange, tropical town.

The afternoon sun, however, was too hot for them to do much walking around, and they entered a wine shop to cool off.

A pretty native girl of about fourteen years waited on them.

Even at that age she looked to be a fully developed little woman.

She spoke only Spanish, which the boys did not understand, but the professor did, and he gave their orders.

The girl, whose name was Estrella, seemed to take quite a fancy to Jack, and favored him with several coquettish smiles.

Jack noticed that she hovered around the table when not taking orders from other visitors, and whenever he looked at her he found her eyes on him.

The boy felt somewhat flattered by the attention she bestowed upon him, and he wished he were able to converse with her.

They remained an hour in the shop, and then took their leave, Jack raising his hat politely to the little waitress and receiving a smile in return.

After a jaunt around they were forced to seek the shelter of another wine-shop, where they remained a good half hour.

Thus they alternated between the street and the shade of a shop or sheltered garden, until the afternoon was well spent, and the walking became more bearable.

They slowly worked their way up the hillside to a Romish church, which stood on the suburbs of the town.

The residence of the padre in charge was close by, and as they approached they saw a clerical-looking stout man seated in the shade of a big tree with a book of prayers in his hand.

He rose on observing that they were strangers and foreigners, and came forward to greet them.

He invited them to rest on a rustic bench under the spreading tree.

The professor accepted and the two engaged in a conversation in Spanish.

The padre was delighted to find that the old gentleman was a college professor, and said that it was seldom that he came in contact with one of his kind.

It would give him great pleasure, he said, to show the professor and his young companions through the old church, though he admitted it was conspicuous for nothing save its age and the few rare books and paintings which were still preserved within its thick brick and mud-coated walls.

He told when it was built, a matter of a hundred and fifty years since, when Belize was merely a coast village, chiefly inhabited by native Indians who lived in rude huts, fashioned by themselves, and bossed by a few Spaniards who had established a trading station there.

He narrated how the English had encroached on the little settlement, which flourished more successfully under their control, and how the Spaniards had long regarded them as intruders whom they could not get rid of.

Eventually their right to the entire region now known as British Honduras was conceded, and Belize had gradually become a town of some importance.

In return for the padre's confidences, Professor Ogden explained to him how he and the two boys came to be in that part of the world, and the adventure they had participated in made them objects of added interest to the good priest.

Finally he went into the house and had a female servant bring them fruits and a sweet, non-alcoholic wine much used in that region.

Then he showed them over the church, and exhibited the few real curiosities it contained, one of which was the altar book which was used when the church first came into existence, and was kept in a glass case.

Lying on the cover of this book was the ring which had been worn by the first padre, and which, the reverend gentleman said, had been blessed by the reigning pope.

When they came out of the church the sun was sinking behind the mountain in the west, and its last beams were flashing upon the turret-shaped roof of an old monastery built upon the top of a distant mountain peak.

Jack called the professor's attention to it, and he asked the padre what the building was.

"The Monastery of the Gray Brotherhood, a religious order over one hundred years old," was the reply. "If you would like to visit it I will supply you with a letter of introduction to the Prior, and you will be shown over the building. It is well worth a visit."

"I should be glad to look the establishment over, and I dare say my young friends would likewise appreciate the opportunity to view what they are not likely to find the chance to see soon again," said the professor, politely.

The padre told the professor to return about one on the following day.

"I will have mules ready for you and you will make the trip in the care of a guide," said the padre.

Professor Ogden promised to be on hand with the boys, then wishing the priest good-afternoon, the three retraced their steps to the schooner, reaching the wharf after dark, and in time to sit down to supper.

"We are having something of a time after all," said Jack to Sam, as they sat with their backs against the mizzenmast of the schooner after the meal.

The skipper and the professor were seated further aft conversing.

The night was a brilliant one, and the partly lighted town was easily discernible close at hand.

"Bet your life we are. I'm sorry that we've passed up our studies. It's a bore to have to study in vacation time, even if it's a good cause," said Sam.

"We'll get back in time to make a hasty review with the professor before we start for Princeton."

"Now that we are out of the danger zone, I'm not in such an awful rush to get home."

"You shouldn't say that, Sam. Think of the trouble our folks are in over our disappearance. Recollect, we are among the missing."

"That's right," admitted Sam. "I dare say the fatted calf will be killed for our benefit when we do get back."

"Look yonder, Sam, up the mountain. There's a light. Now it's gone. Looked something like the signal the Cubans gave

'us in reply to ours. I guess it came from that old monastery we're going to visit to-morrow."

"Curious place to have a monastery, don't you think, in that out-of-the-way spot?"

"I don't know. There's a good road leading to within a short distance of it, the padre told the professor. He said that the early monks built it. Those kind of religious houses were usually built at a distance from civilization. Monks are persons who have renounced the world, so far as its pleasures are concerned, so it is reasonable that they would prefer to keep as retired as possible."

"That spot is retired enough. It's all of four miles from this town, and away up among the mountain crags. They have one advantage, and that's a fine view of the country in this direction and the Caribbean Sea."

"And I'll bet it's a whole lot cooler up on the mountain than it is down here. I never knew what real heat was till we struck the tropics."

"I bet you. It's as hot as fury in this place."

"The skipper said to-night that he had arranged for a cargo for New York, so we won't be here long."

But the boys were fated to remain longer in that latitude than they dreamed.

CHAPTER VI.

MONASTERY OF THE GRAY BROTHERHOOD.

After dinner on the following afternoon the professor and the boys started from the vessel to keep their engagement with the padre of the church.

On the way Jack suggested that they drop in at the first wine shop they visited the preceding day for a drink of the sweet wine of the country.

It wasn't that he cared for the wine that he proposed to stop at the shop, but his real object was to enjoy another mild flirtation with the Senora Estrella.

The professor agreed, and they entered the place.

When they took their seats at the table a woman of no particular charms came forward to wait on them.

Jack was disappointed, and looked eagerly around the room for his charmer.

She was not there, and they left fifteen minutes later without seeing her.

On reaching the padre's domicile, they found him seated under the tree waiting for them.

On the other side of the tree four peaceful looking mules were hitched.

The padre welcomed them with great cordiality, and said everything was prepared for their trip.

He handed Professor Ogden an unsealed note intended for the prior.

It would secure them every attention, he said.

He explained that the Gray Brotherhood were a particularly austere congregation, and therefore they might expect to find everything at the monastery on the simplest lines.

The prior spoke Spanish, his native tongue, but could also converse fluently in English and French.

The sub-prior spoke German in addition to the other languages.

The majority of the brothers spoke only Spanish.

"How do they live?" asked Jack.

"They cultivate a large piece of ground in an enclosed valley near the monastery," replied the padre, who understood and spoke English very well. "Their diet is almost wholly vegetables and fruit, and they drink a wine made from their own grapes."

"Do they ever visit the town?" asked the professor.

"Never. When they have a message to send, or require medicine or some particular article, one of the lay brothers is sent on the errand. You will not see the faces of any brother you may encounter, as they wear cowls. The prior and sub-prior are excused in this respect except on certain days and occasions. The monastery is not often favored by visitors, for admission is denied to strangers, except they be vouched for by me, and the time is propitious. You are fortunate in being favored with a chance to visit the Brotherhood, and you will be courteously treated," said the padre.

As it was time they should make their start, the priest called the man who had been delegated to accompany them, and he appeared with three light sun shades in his hand.

He was a Spaniard, and but for the fact that he was provided by the priest, the party would have had some misgivings about trusting themselves to his guidance, for rascality appeared to be written on every line of his countenance.

He bowed politely to the professor, flashed a keen look at the boys, and then announced that he was ready to proceed.

He handed the three a shade each, untethered the mules and directed the party to mount, which they did without difficulty, for the mules were small, but sturdy.

Waving their adieus to the padre, the party set off with the guide in the lead.

The mules required no guidance, for they trotted along after the leader at a gentle pace, which did not shake their riders up.

Professor Ogden came after the man, whose name they had been told was Pedro.

Behind him followed Jack, with Sam in the rear.

Sam tried to induce his animal to get up alongside of his friend's, but the mule could not be persuaded to, either by chirrups or kicks, to change his position.

Apparently they were accustomed to going in single file, and would not change their habit.

Furthermore, each maintained a certain distance, not far behind the other, which they never varied.

"Say, isn't this great?" sang out Sam to Jack.

"Something new in the traveling line for us," returned his friend.

"This mule of mine is so small I can almost touch the ground with my feet."

"Same with me," said Jack, over his shoulder.

"I've been trying to get this beast alongside of yours, but he won't oblige me. I never saw such a stubborn animal."

"That's the reputation of mules."

"I know; but he seems otherwise a very decent sort of mule. You ought to see the way he works his ears when I speak to him. He lays one ear back, then the other, as if listening. Then he wags them from side to side, and drops them as though saying 'No.' Try it on your donkey."

Jack slapped his animal to attract his attention and then spoke to him.

Up came the big ears and back they went.

"Get a move on," said Jack.

The ears lay still for a moment, and then wagged from side to side and dropped.

Jack laughed hilariously.

"I guess the animal wished me to know that he didn't understand American slang," he said. "He's used to the Spanish lingo. I wish I could speak it," he said.

That reflection brought the face and figure of the Spanish waitress to his mind, and he stopped laughing.

He wondered if he would ever see her again.

"Say, this puts me in mind of a picture I saw in an old novel," said Sam. "It represented half a dozen old-time British sailors, with ribbons in their hats, and looking as if they were out on a tear, galloping down a foreign street astride of small mules like these. One of them had been thrown and was rolling in the dust, while his friends were giving him the laugh."

"There doesn't seem to be any gallop in these mules. They trot along as sober as judges. This is what I call easy riding," said Jack.

The road went straight out of town toward the mountain range.

It was a very good road and wide enough to permit two large wagons to pass each other comfortably.

It was chiefly travelled by the vehicles from the plantations that lay on the right and the left across the valley.

The party met several of these carrying fruit and the various commodities of the country to the town.

Women on foot were also passed.

They were connected with the small farms, and carried baskets of produce on their heads.

It took an hour to reach the foothills, where a wide path branched up the mountain side, winding in and out as it accommodated itself to the ground.

The mules continued their ceaseless, monotonous trot until the trail began to grow steep, and then without orders they subsided to a walk.

From this point the party only caught occasional and brief views of the monastery perched like an eagle's nest on its dizzy height.

The path led straight into a wild gorge, where the sound of falling waters struck upon their ears.

Presently they came in sight of the waterfall, which dropped some sixty or more feet down the sheer face of the rock, and whirled away through a rocky channel that crossed their path many yards below the level of the trail.

The break was bridged and they passed over it with the thunder of the fall in their ears, and the spray in their faces.

"Gee! That's a fine waterfall, all right," said Sam.

"That's what it is. It's too bad we haven't a kodac to take a picture of it, and of the monastery when we come to it. It's further away than I thought it was," said Jack.

As he spoke they came to a spot where the road branched away into a precipitous ravine.

The guide stuck to the ascending track and they continued to mount higher and higher, surrounded by wild and barren scenery.

At last they came suddenly in sight of the monastery again and found it was close at hand.

It was perched on a rocky crag, the encircling wall rising from the very edge of the crevasse surrounding it.

A bridge was thrown across the abyss at the point where the mountain path was ended.

The view from this spot over the valley and far out to sea was sublime, and the boys remained speechless from very awe.

The crag on which the building stood arose a thousand feet out of the midst of the range, and the place looked very different to what it appeared to the eye of an observer in the distant town of Belize.

The guide seized a horn hanging in a sheltered nook of the wall and sounded three blasts upon it.

In a short time a panel in the big gate was opened and the face of a lay brother looked out on the party.

He recognized Pedro, and a few words were exchanged between them.

The gate was then opened and the party admitted into a yard.

Professor Ogden handed his letter of introduction to the lay brother, and that individual went away to deliver it to the prior.

He was gone some time.

When he returned he told the three Americans to follow him.

He led them into the small reception room on the ground floor, and there they found the prior awaiting them.

The reverend gentleman welcomed them in a solemn way, and said he would be glad to permit them to inspect such parts of the monastery as could be shown to an outsider.

He said that the Order did not encourage visitors, but that any one recommended by the padre was entitled to the hospitality of the place.

"You must be hot and tired after your long trip," he said. "I have ordered some refreshments for you in the refectory. We will go there."

At the end of a long plain table they found three plates, each with a knife and a glass beside it.

Dishes containing cakes made of maize, and several kinds of fruit, flanked by a flagon of ancient look, and partly filled with sweet wine, stood in the center.

The prior begged them to help themselves, saying that he would send the sub-prior to show them around, and would meet them when they were about to leave.

The refectory was a long room with a high ceiling, one side being wholly of stone, forming the outer wall, the other three consisting of wood of a dark color, and without ornament of any sort.

A bench the length of the table ran on either side of it, and had no back.

Although the afternoon was bright, the narrow slits of windows admitted only a meager light into the room.

"This would make a fine dining-room for a State prison," remarked Jack.

"I should say," said Sam. "It gives me a chill down my back. You couldn't buy me to stay a week in this establishment. It must be a curious bunch who are contented to put in all their life in such a lonesome place. I wonder if they have any idea of what is going on in the world? I'll bet they haven't seen a real newspaper in a coon's age. I guess the only news they get is what is brought by a lay brother when he pays the town a visit."

The cakes were palatable, the fruits delicious and the wine better than was served in the Belize shops so far as their experience went.

When they had finished the sub-prior appeared and announced that he was ready to show them around.

We will not follow them about such parts of the monastery as they were conducted to, but merely say that they were shown the great kitchen, where lay brothers were at work; the wine cellar, which was full of casks, many of them containing wine from fifty to seventy-five years old; the store-room, containing various supplies; one of the sleeping cells of the Brotherhood; the chapel, where mass was said each morn-

ing, and vespers each evening, and finally they were taken to the library.

Here they met for the first time several of the Brothers with their cowls on engaged in reading or copying.

The thousand odd volumes were all old Spanish works, some of them fully a century and more in existence.

Enclosed in a glass case was a written volume of no great size.

Judging from the care taken of it, Professor Ogden inquired if it was of especial value.

"It is the History of the Chan Santa Cruz Indians and the Silver City," said the sub-prior.

"The Silver City!" ejaculated Jack. "What is that?"

"It is a city of mystery," replied the sub-prior. "No one knows for certain that it really exists or ever has existed."

"But that book you say records its history?"

"Ah, yes; but who shall say it is not a chimera of a brain worn down by suffering?"

"If that is your opinion, why do you take such care of the record?"

"Because it was written by the only white man who ever claimed to have seen the Silver City. It is a record of suffering--of an experience unparalleled in human endurance. The Señor Sebastian, its author, was found one morning years ago, a wreck at the foot of the path leading up from the defile. Seemingly out of his mind, he was brought here and tended to until nature triumphed and his reason reasserted itself. Then he told his story to the prior, a venerable man who has since passed the way of all flesh. He was encouraged to put his narrative on paper, and there it is carefully bound to keep the sheets intact. It is a wonderful story, and, if true, demonstrates that there is one place in the world where silver is so plentiful that it is used without stint in the external, as well as the internal decoration of all the houses, imparting luster to the collection of buildings in the sunshine that caused Don Sebastian to call it the Silver City."

"Where is this city situated?"

"Don Sebastian wrote that it was in the center of the country of the Chan Santa Cruz Indians, surrounded by a vast and almost impenetrable swamp, which is carefully guarded at all points by the natives, who kill with poisoned arrows all strangers seeking to investigate its intricacies."

"Who are the Chan Santa Cruz Indians?"

"The survivors of the ancient Itzaes, Lacandones, Choles and Manches, those formidable Indian families who successfully resisted the force of the Spanish arms, and still find a shelter in the fastnesses of their trackless domain, where they maintain their independence and preserve and practice the rites and habits of their ancestors as they existed before the discovery of the New World."

"This is interesting," said Jack. "Isn't it, Sam?"

"Very. I should like to see the Silver City. It would be something to talk about when we got back home," answered Sam.

"The señor's story is written in Spanish, I suppose?" said Jack.

"It is," replied the sub-deacon.

"Perhaps you wouldn't mind permitting the professor to look it over?"

"Impossible! When the Señor Sebastian died, which he did soon after finishing the manuscript, he exacted a promise, readily accorded him, that no eye, save that of a Brother of our Order, should ever scan the writing. That promise is sacred and binding, even though his narrative may have no foundation in fact."

"That settles it, I suppose," said Jack, somewhat disappointed.

Evidently it did, for the sub-prior turned away and politely motioned them to follow him out of the library.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SHORT CUT.

They went to the reception-room, where the prior himself met them and said he hoped they were pleased with what they had seen.

Professor Ogden assured him that they had no fault to find with the way they had been treated, and that they would remember their visit with pleasure, and were sensible of the obligation they were under for the privilege accorded them.

A lay brother appeared with a tray of wine glasses and the prior wished them a pleasant return to their native land.

They were then conducted to the yard, where they found the mules and their sinister looking guide awaiting them.

The sun was on the point of setting when the monastery gate closed behind them and the downward trip began.

When they reached the point where the path divided, the guide stopped and asked Professor Ogden if they would like to see the hidden valley where the Brotherhood cultivated their crops.

The professor said they would, so the guide turned down the branch path leading through a great defile.

Inside of ten minutes the defile, which twisted abruptly to the left, suddenly ended in an opening which revealed the little valley in question, nestling in the very heart of the mountain.

It was a veritable oasis of rich verdure, plants, vines and trees hidden away from the outside world.

The mountain crags and peaks rose on all sides, like an irregular amphitheater, forming complete shelter from the wind, which sometimes blew with great violence in that neighborhood.

While they were inspecting the beautiful Eden-like scene, darkness came on, and the light azure sky faded into a deep blue, resplendent with glittering stars.

"If the senor has no objection we will take the short cut through the mountain, and on the way I will show you the Devil's Cave," said Pedro, obsequiously.

The opportunity of seeing a cave dedicated to his infernal majesty took the fancy of the boys, and they expressed an eagerness to go by the short cut.

Professor Ogden offered no objection, so the guide led the way across the valley to a narrow cleft in the rocky mountain side.

It was just wide enough to permit of their going on foot, with the mules following them.

It soon widened out into a narrow tunnel that, however, was not tall enough for them to remount.

As it was, the roof in many places brushed their hats.

The incline was easy, and the rocks under them not at all slippery.

Pedro had produced a lantern, which gave out a ghostly kind of illumination, but it served to light their way.

It aroused a gruesome feeling thus to penetrate the bowels of the great mountain, but the two boys, at any rate, did not feel particularly nervous over the sensation.

They were game to see everything that was to be seen, and the stranger it was the more interesting would be the story of their adventures on their return.

Although this had been represented as a short cut by the guide, it seemed to take a long time to reach the Devil's Cave, which was a little over half way to the outlet in the valley below.

Finally they entered a cavernous opening that admitted them to a huge, airy chamber, walled with wonderfully shaped terraces, and studded with curious shaped pillars.

Here Pedro produced a resinous torch, lighted it, and waved it about his head, producing a smoky glare that was reflected from a million gleaming points of rock.

The peculiar effect quite astonished the professor and the boys.

They could not understand what produced it.

Naturally, the old gentleman made inquiry of the guide.

He was told that the cave was coated with a substance akin to mica, but Pedro could not explain why it was so.

The chamber proved to be of immense size.

Pulpits, cathedral aisles and figures strangely resembling human statues, dotted the expanse to the right and left.

Leaving the mules at the entrance, they threaded their way through this astonishing maze, every movement of the torch throwing some new, strange light or shadow into the misty aisles.

Suddenly they came upon a dark, still lake, the ebony water lying as flat and motionless as a sheet of glass.

Circling this grim, death-like pool, Pedro led them to a corner where yawned a black, forbidding chasm.

A more gruesome spot was not conceivable than this gaping death-trap hidden in the mountain depths.

"How deep is it?" Jack asked, with an involuntary shudder.

The professor repeated the question in Spanish to the guide.

Pedro made no reply, but picking up a large boulder, of which there were many lying around, he launched it over the edge of the precipice.

The first rumble of the rock against the side of the chasm died away, and the party stood listening expectantly, scarcely breathing.

As the seconds passed by and the silence was unbroken, a weird, creepy feeling stole over the three Americans.

Was this hole a bottomless pit?

They had begun to give up hope of hearing further from the

boulder, when from the great chasm a far-away, whispering splash sounded, echoing on and on until the chole chamber filled with a muffled, sonorous boom.

"Holy mackerel!" gasped Sam. "I've had enough of this. Let's get away."

His feelings were shared by Jack and the professor.

They had seen all they wanted of the Devil's Cave.

Pedro surveyed them with an evil grin on his features.

"The senors have seen nothing like this before?" he said in Spanish.

The professor admitted the fact, saying that the cave was both impressive and terrifying.

"We will go," said the guide.

They followed him with alacrity.

Thirty minutes later they came out into the starlight on the side of the mountain, and found a mountain road before them.

There was no sign of the sea or the distant town of Belize. All around them were mountain peaks and passes.

"I thought you said this was a short cut to the Belize road?" the professor said to the guide.

"Si, senor. We are not far from the road now," replied Pedro, with a leer that Jack, who was looking at him, did not like.

They remounted and started down the road, which was pretty steep, but that fact did not appear to worry the mules any.

"Say, Sam, do you know I don't fancy this short cut much," said Jack.

"It appears to be a mighty long short cut," replied Sam.

"It is. It's longer than the road we came by. I'll swear to that. Still, I am not sorry we came this way, for we've seen the most wonderful cave in the world. I wouldn't have missed that for a farm."

"That bottomless pit gave me the shivers. Just think where a fellow would drop to if he fell into that hole in the dark."

"And the black pond—didn't it look creepy?"

"I suppose that's where Old Nick takes his morning bath."

Before Jack could reply the road swung to the left and they found themselves apparently at the foot of the range, with a lighted two-story building before them where the mountain road joined another road which ran both to the right and left.

Pedro turned his mule toward the open door of the house which, from the sign swinging above the entrance, appeared to be a country inn, and the other mules followed.

"The senors would perhaps like to dine here?" said the guide, in a tone that indicated he took their acquiescence for granted.

As it was late and all felt hungry, the professor said they would be glad to partake of a meal if one could be readily served.

A roughly-attired man appeared in the doorway and greeted Pedro as if he knew him.

He was as rascally as the guide himself, and the boys did not feel easy at the sight o f him.

Nor were they reassured when they perceived four other hard fellows inside drinking and playing cards at a table beside one of the open windows.

Pedro introduced the man at the door as the landlord, and that individual said dinner would be served to them immediately.

The guide took the mules into the yard and the three Americans entered the inn and seated themselves around a table at the other window.

The landlord went to a back door and shouted some orders in Spanish.

"How far are we from the Belize road, professor?" asked Jack.

"I haven't the least idea, but I will inquire," said Professor Ogden.

He called the landlord over and put the question to him.

"You are on the Belize road, senor," was the man's answer.

"Oh, it runs among the mountains, eh?"

"Si, senor. It goes clear through the range and beyond to the town of Quiche."

"And how far might we be from Belize?"

"Seven miles."

The professor asked no more questions, and the landlord went over to the men at the other table, with whom he talked in low tones.

"So we are seven miles from town," said Jack. "That proves our guide lied when he said he would take us down the mountain by a short cut. Had we gone the way by which we reached the monastery, we should have got back to Belize before this."

I wonder what the rascal's object was in persuading us to come this way?"

Professor Ogden looked at Jack, but did not reply.

He was beginning to have his own suspicion concerning the guide's conduct, but he could not fathom the object that underlay it.

At that moment a girl entered the room with a tray filled with dishes.

She walked straight over to the table at which the three Americans sat, and putting the tray down on a nearby table, began transferring the dishes.

Jack glanced casually at her, then stared in some amazement.

The girl was Estrella, the little waitress of the Belize wine shop.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN A BAD FIX.

When Jack recovered from his surprise, which was shared in by Sam when he saw who the girl was, he smiled at the fair waitress.

Though their eyes met, the Senorita Estrella gave no sign that she had seen Jack or his party before.

She went on with her business and served the meal.

She hovered about the table, however, as the Americans began their meal.

The landlord, however, came forward and sent her away.

He brought wine from the bar for them, and conversed with the professor.

The meal was half over when Jack, happening to look across the room, saw the girl standing at the door.

She made a motion, the meaning of which was not clear to him, and disappeared.

Suddenly a scream was heard at the back.

Jack was sure it came from the girl, and he half rose in his chair.

The landlord started for the back door.

Around the front of the house came a patter of feet, and then the heavy tread of a man.

Past the window flew a figure that Jack recognized as Estrella.

From her outstretched hand a piece of paper flew into the room and landed on Jack's plate.

He picked it up as the form of Pedro, apparently in pursuit of the girl, went by, muttering curses in Spanish.

Jack looked at the paper, saw something written on it in Spanish, handed it to the professor, and then made a dash for the door.

Two of the four men at the other table jumped for the door and filled it, blocking Jack, apparently by accident.

Jack tried to push his way between them, but they wouldn't budge, and seemed to be interested in the pursuit outside.

Another shrill scream came from the road.

Pedro had caught the little waitress and was dragging her roughly back to the house.

"Here, let me out!" cried Jack, to the pair of men.

They paid no attention to him.

That made the young American mad.

He stepped back and flung himself against one of them, sending him staggering outside.

That gave him an opening, and out he went and made for Pedro as he was dragging the unwilling girl along.

"Let that girl alone," he cried to the guide.

The fellow understood him easy enough and gave him a wicked look.

He said something in Spanish which Jack, of course, did not understand.

"Save me! Save me!" cried Estrella, holding out her free arm to Jack.

Although he could not translate her words, her appeal was plain to him, and he acted on it.

He seized Pedro's wrist and gave it a twist which compelled him to let go of the girl's arm.

With an imprecation the guide flashed out a knife.

Jack handed him a straight-from-the-shoulder blow in the jaw, and he tumbled over on the ground in a heap, the knife falling at the girl's feet.

She snatched it up and with a bound ran toward the bushes and vanished, just as the landlord and two of the men came rushing on the scene.

Behind those three followed Sam, with the professor trying to keep pace, but falling behind.

The other two ruffianly chaps came trotting in their rear.

The situation looked very squarely from all points of the compass.

The landlord seized Jack by the arm and roared at him in Spanish.

He might have saved his breath as far as the boy was concerned.

Then Sam butted in between them and pulled the landlord's grip off.

"What in thunder is the matter with you?" he said, as he pushed the man back.

A scrap between the boys and the three men looked imminent when Professor Ogden came up in no little excitement.

He addressed the landlord in Spanish.

The man replied in a sullen way.

There was an ugly glint in the eyes, and he seemed to be depating with himself what move he would make.

At this juncture Pedro recovered his wits and extricated himself from the dirt.

He looked around for his knife, but failed to find it, of course.

The professor's gaze falling on him, he ordered him to fetch the mules.

Pedro gave no heed to the order.

By this time the other two men had joined the crowd.

Professor Ogden recognized that matters were critical.

The piece of paper that came through the window, and which Jack had passed to him the moment before he left the table, bore the words, "Be on your guard. You are in great danger."

They were written in a girlish hand, and, in the light of what had happened, he knew the warning had been sent them by the girl waitress.

But the meaning of it the professor could not understand. Why should he and the two boys be in great danger?

If robbery was contemplated, they had little to lose, and that fact was no secret to Pedro the guide, for he had remarked to the rascal that he would have to go without his expected gratuity, for the time being, if they stopped at the inn, and he had replied, with one of his grins, that the fact didn't worry him.

So if robbery was not in the wind, what was?

These thoughts flashed through the professor's mind in the fraction of a moment.

Old as he was, he was a man of courage and resolution, but he had to confess that the situation puzzled and disturbed him.

He knew both boys like a book.

They were fine specimens of stalwart American lads, and as plucky as any two boys could be, but what could the three, unarmed as they were, do against this bunch of ruffians on their own territory?

Once more the professor demanded of Pedro that he fetch out the mules so that they could proceed on their way.

The landlord made a sign to the guide, whereupon he said:

"Since the senor insists, the mules shall be brought."

With that he turned away and started for the yard.

The threatening manner of the landlord vanished, and he made some sort of an apology for his heated conduct, inviting his guests to return to the inn and finish their meal.

The other four rascals drew off a few steps, and the trouble seemed to have blown over as suddenly as it had come about.

At least, so the boys were inclined to think, but the professor was not so sure about it.

All hands returned to the inn, where the old gentleman asked what he owed for their entertainment, including Pedro and the feed of the mules.

The landlord named a moderate sum, which the professor paid.

"The senor and his friends will take a parting drink with me," said the rascal, producing a bottle and glasses.

The professor declined on the score that they had had enough liquid refreshment for the evening.

"Senor, I insist," said the landlord, pouring out the liquor.

Professor Ogden, scenting treachery, was firm in his refusal to drink, or permit the boys to do so.

That brought matters to a climax.

At a sign from the host of the inn the four ruffians threw themselves upon the American.

Two of them tackled the old gentleman and bore him to the ground, while the other two essayed to do up the boys.

Jack and Sam, however, stood them off with their fists until they were reinforced by the landlord and Pedro.

In a few minutes the three Americans were bound hand and foot and dragged upstairs to a room, where they were left to ruminate over the uncertainty of their future.

CHAPTER IX.

THE NIGHT RIDE.

"We're in a nice kettle of fish," said Sam, in a dismal tone.

"I'd like to know what it all means," said Jack. "I suppose you can't guess, professor?"

"I haven't the slightest idea what is behind the conduct of these ruffians."

"What was written on that piece of paper the girl threw in at the window, and which I handed you because it was in Spanish?"

"Nothing illuminating. It simply warned us to be on our guard, as we were in danger."

"It did us no good, and the señorita herself got in trouble over it. The girl evidently tried to do us a service, and was detected by that rascally guide. It is somewhat curious to find her at this inn, when yesterday she was waiting on customers at the Belize wine shop. There must be some connection between the two places, or else she had reasons for changing her stamping ground. When she served us with our meal this evening she did not appear to recognize us as the three Americans she waited on in the wine shop yesterday. I thought that was odd, because she could not help remembering our faces and persons. At any rate, she gave no sign that she had ever seen us before. I am now satisfied she knew we were up against some crooked game, and having decided to warn us of our danger, she thought it best not to show that she knew us, for the landlord was keeping a close watch on us," said Jack.

"The girl tried to do us a good turn, which shows she was not in sympathy with these people," said the professor. "I am glad you helped her escape the consequences of her act."

As the moments flew by they talked over the mystery of their capture, and tried to think what possible object could be at the bottom of it.

All conjecture proved futile, and at the end of an hour they were no nearer a solution than when they began figuring on it.

They could easily hear the six men downstairs talking together at the table by the window, but the professor could not distinguish a word that passed between them.

"It must be after nine o'clock now," said Jack. "Captain Jenkins is doubtless wondering what is detaining us."

"Probably he thinks that the prior of the monastery invited us to remain to supper," said Sam.

"Even so, we should have returned to the schooner before this hour."

"Then maybe he thinks we were invited to supper by the padre and pressed to remain with him during the evening. It is cooler up around the chuch than aboard the vessel."

"If we don't return at a reasonable hour, I suppose he'll send one of the crew to the padre's house to make inquiries about us. Of course, the priest will say that he has not seen us since we started for the monastery. Maybe the skipper will then send a party to the monastery to try and find out what has become of us. When he learns that we left there hours ago, very likely he will call on the police to investigate the matter, don't you think so, professor?"

Professor Ogden agreed that Captain Jenkins would interest himself in finding them if he could.

An hour went by and then they heard the footsteps of men ascending the stairs.

"I'm afraid they're after us," said Jack.

Such proved to be the fact, for the door was unlocked and the four ruffians who were seated at the table by the window when they arrived at the inn entered the room.

Three of them carried long Spanish cloaks on their arms.

Each of the prisoners were enveloped in the folds of a cloak, carried downstairs as if he were a dummy, and placed in a covered wagon which stood in front of the inn.

Two of the men got on the seat in front, and two got in with the prisoners, then the wagon started along the road into the mountains in the direction opposite to Belize.

The cloaks had been lifted from the prisoners after the start was made so they would have no difficulty in getting air, but no reply was made to the professor when he demanded to know where they were about to be taken.

The road was good and the wagon went fast.

Inside of fifteen minutes the vehicle emerged from the short range and continued across a fairly level farming country.

A mile from the mountains the wagon came to where another road joined the one it had been following.

The driver took the new road, which ran at right angles with the other one, or toward the north.

The three Americans did not feel like doing any talking in

the presence of their captors, but they did a lot of quiet thinking.

The professor was deeply concerned as to the outcome of their adventure, for he felt that he was responsible for whatever happened to the boys.

As the time went by and the wagon went steadily on, the two boys dozed off to sleep, but the professor remained awake.

The vehicle passed through a silent village about midnight, and for the next two hours rumbled along the lonesome road.

Then another village was encountered and passed.

It was close to sunrise when the wagon turned into the yard of a roadside inn which was wrapped in silence and darkness.

The proprietor of the establishment was aroused, and a brief talk took place between him and one of the wagon party.

The result of this was that the three prisoners, enveloped once more in the cloaks, were taken into the loft of a barn and deposited on the hay.

Their bonds were carefully examined, and then they were left alone.

"I wonder if we have reached the end of our journey?" said Jack.

The professor said that was impossible to determine.

"We are helpless," he said, "and must stand for whatever may be in store for us. We have traveled steadily at a good pace all night, and must be fully fifty miles from Belize."

As a matter of fact, they were nearly seventy miles from that town, and close to the southern border of Yucatan.

The professor, not having closed his eyes during the trip, was quite weary, and as the boys speedily went off to sleep again, he followed their example.

While they slept, one of the men came up in the loft and looked at them.

It was now broad daylight and the sunshine filtered through the many cracks in the sides of the building.

There were occasional sounds of activity in the yard and in the barn below.

The man departed and did not return for an hour.

The prisoners were still asleep.

He went away without disturbing them.

It was about noon when Jack awoke of his own accord and looked around.

"Where in thunder am I?" he ejaculated, for the moment puzzled by the situation he found himself in. "Oh, I remember now. Here the three of us are triced up like pigs on the way to market. And it's morning at last. We have evidently been here some time—two or three hours, I should judge. I suppose there will be another chapter soon to this adventure of ours. This is a whole lot worse than running the Cuban blockade, for then we had a chance of escaping if things turned ugly, but here there seems to be no escape for us. My! I wonder what will be the end of this thing? I'm afraid that Princeton will not see us at the appointed time. It won't miss the non-appearance of a couple of very fresh Freshmen, but the faculty may have to fill the gap left vacant by Professor Ogden."

At that point in his reflection Sam woke up.

"Are you awake, Jack?" he asked, rolling over to look at his friend.

"Never more so, old chap. How are you feeling?"

"I don't believe I have any feeling left in my arms, they're so cramped with these blamed cords," growled his companion.

"It's a pity we can't get rid of them. If I was free, and had a club in my hand, I'd guarantee to make things hum around the heads of those four Spanish scoundrels who are running away with us."

"A revolver would be better than a club, for those chaps have knives."

"Oh, hang their knives! A stout cudgel is worth a dozen of them. It is a fine situation we are in for American boys, don't you think?"

"It is altogether too fine to suit me. It won't be long now before something will happen."

As if in answer to his remark, there was a slight noise at the trap in the floor at the head of the stairs.

"Somebody's coming," said Jack.

There was no doubt of that, for the trap rose of a sudden and a slight figure, apparently a boy, shot through it, and then pushed the trap back in place.

The boys wondered who the newcomer was, and they watched his movements not without some surprise when they saw him grab a box and try to pull it over the trap.

The effort was beyond his strength, so he looked for something else.

Nothing suitable seemed to be at hand, or at least the youth,

who seemed to be nervous and excited, could not find anything.

Finally he stood up and looked around.

He spied the three figures on the hay.

Instantly he darted toward them.

A bright knife flashed in his grasp and the boys gave themselves up for dead.

"Holy mackerel! This is our finish!" ejaculated Sam, feeling a cold shiver run down his spine.

Jack made no sound.

Things looked desperate, but they were powerless to save themselves.

Three strides brought the strange boy right upon them.

He was a good-looking chap, but his black eyes snapped fire, and his breath came quick.

He knelt over Sam and pulled his face around to the shaft of light that came through a long crack in the wall, while his knife hung within a couple of inches of the young American's heart.

"Oh, my!" faltered Sam, who thought his last hour had come.

As the words gushed through his teeth the hand left his face and the boy turned quickly on Jack.

The knife slipped between the cords that held Jack's arms, and the youth gave an inward swish.

The cords parted and Jack's arms were free.

Amazement held the young American inactive.

What was the meaning of this?

As the thought rushed through his mind the youth slipped to his feet, and with another swish freed his ankles.

"Quick, Señor Jack!" cried the youth, the first word in Spanish, as he sprang up and pulled Jack with him. "Quick, as you value your life. Push the box over the trap."

The two sentences were not comprehensible to the young American, but the lad's meaning was clear as he pointed at the box and then at the trap.

At the same time he dragged the benumbed Jack toward the former.

Dropping the knife, he seized the box and motioned for Jack to lay hold.

Though his head was buzzing with the mystery of this astonishing business, Jack got busy with the box and it glided over the trap.

Then Jack turned to the lad for an explanation, forgetting that he could not understand the language of the country, but the youth had snatched up the knife and was busy freeing the professor, whose sleep was suddenly ended by the operation.

Then he went over to Sam and cut him loose.

The three were free and Sam and the professor speedily got on their legs.

"Find out who this chap is, professor," said Jack, in an excited tone, as visions of their escape rose before his fancy. "He is evidently a friend. Heavens, I could hug him out of sheer gratitude."

"And I thought he was going to murder us with that knife of his," blurted out Sam, feeling like kicking himself now for the fear he had felt when the crisis seemed upon them.

Before the professor could say anything, an excited flow of words in Spanish came from their rescuer's lips.

"My gracious!" exclaimed Professor Ogden, in amazement, "it's Señorita Estrella."

"What!" cried Jack, grabbing the girl and bringing their faces together. "Are you the pretty waitress, Estrella?"

His words were Greek to her, but a strange light flashed in her blazing eyes.

"Oh, señor!" she cried, half comprehending his meaning as her name left his lips.

"By George! You're a hummer!" cried Jack, and unable to resist the impulse, he bent down and kissed her.

She drew back in confusion, and two or three words fluttered from her.

At that moment there came a noise from the floor, then an ejaculation from a man below, and then a heaving sound as though some one was striving to push up the trap.

CHAPTER X.

TURNING THE TABLES.

"The rascals are on us," cried Sam. "If we only had a weapon apiece, I guess we'd make them sing."

"They can't get up here through the trap; that's one consolation," said Jack, who had released his grasp on the blushing Estrella.

"Then they will come by one of the windows," said Sam, motioning toward the front and rear of the loft.

"You stand guard by that one and I'll stand by this one, and we'll let the first one up have a poke in the jaw that will rattle his teeth. These Spaniards are not used to slugging tactics, I judge. Whether they are or not, our fists are our only weapons," said Jack.

The boys took up their positions, leaving the girl and the professor in rapid conversation.

Estrella was letting a little light in on the mystery of their abduction, and the professor was absorbing the facts.

The man on the stairs below had given up the attempt to force open the trap.

He couldn't understand what held it down.

Something apparently was wrong, and it pointed to the possibility that the prisoners had managed to free themselves and were sitting on the trap to hold it down.

He descended and went to the door of the barn.

His shouts presently attracted a couple of his comrades who were browsing on the bench in front of the inn, as well as the fourth man who acted as the boss of the expedition.

The bunch came together, and the three listened to their comrade's statement.

The leader, to make sure of the matter, mounted the stairs and tried to trap himself.

There was no doubt about it being fast.

As it couldn't very well have fastened itself, the inference was that the prisoners had freed themselves and secured it in some way.

One of the men recalled having seen a box in the loft, and though he had not inspected it to see whether it was full of anything or not, the four were agreed that probably it had grain or something in it, and was weighty enough to hold down the trap.

It was a cheerful reflection for them to know that the prisoners were unarmed.

It was also comforting to them that the prisoners had had nothing to eat yet.

The man who found the trap barred against him was the individual who had previously visited the loft several times to see if the prisoners were awake, in which case it was his intention to fetch them something in the shape of breakfast.

That was his errand when he discovered that he was barred out.

As it was the intention of the party to remain at the inn until dark before resuming their journey, they had plenty of time to figure out what plan to adopt toward their released quarry in the loft.

Naturally, the prisoners would try to make their escape.

They wondered why they had not made the attempt the moment they got loose.

It really seemed ridiculous of them burying themselves in the loft.

The fact that they had done so rather puzzled the four rascals, until the first chap suggested that maybe they had only got free about the time he made his appearance in the barn, which happened to be the truth, as the reader knows, and that when they heard him coming they had pulled the box on top of the trap to keep him out.

Accepting their comrade's suggestion as the real state of affairs, the leader said that since they couldn't enter the loft by way of the trap, they must do so by way of the windows.

"We will get a couple of ladders, put them under the windows and take them on both sides. In order to distract their attention, you, Pinto, must go up under the trap and assault it with the end of a pitchfork or a shovel—whatever will give them the idea that we are trying to force our way up there. It is quite possible that the box is not heavy enough of itself to hold the trap down, and that the three of them are seated on it. In that case it will be quite simple for us to get in through the windows, and once in they will be at our mercy."

Thus spoke the leader with the air of an astute commander who had formulated a brilliant piece of strategy, and his companions told him that he had a great head.

No doubt he had, but it was overloaded with rascality.

Two of the men were sent to find a pair of ladders.

The proprietor of the inn had one, which he said was under the barn, and he referred the men to a house a quarter of a mile away, where they could borrow a second in his name.

It took half an hour to get the second ladder on the ground, and Jack saw it coming on the shoulders of one of their captors.

The other ladder was waiting on the ground.

For fear the prisoners might try to escape by one of the windows before they were ready to act, both windows were watched.

While the rascals were preparing to put an end to the liberty their prisoners had secured, quite ignorant of the fact that the pretty Estrella was the cause of the disarrangement of their plans, and that she was in the loft with the three Americans, the subjects of their attention, with the girl, were maintaining their temporary advantage with as much cheerfulness as they could extract from the circumstances.

It was about noon and all hands were hungry.

Estrella herself had eaten nothing since she had had her supper shortly before the arrival of the Americans at the inn.

Her story as related to the professor, as the only one who could converse with her in her own tongue, was that after her escape into the bushes she, knowing what was likely to happen to the Americans, had hung around the inn until the three persons in whom she was interested, though Jack was the real object of her thoughts, were assaulted in the public room of the house.

She took advantage of the excitement to enter the yard and take possession of one of the mules tethered in the barn.

Having a general knowledge of what the rascals intended doing with the three Americans, and fully determined to save them if she could, she started forward along the course subsequently followed by the wagon.

Some hours later she heard the wagon coming on behind, and she concealed herself and the mule behind the bushes, and in the darkness escaped observation.

After that she trotted along after the wagon.

About daybreak she passed a small farmhouse beside the road and saw a boy's suit hanging on a line.

The sight of the garments put an idea into her bright little head.

Dismounting, she entered the yard and secured the clothes.

After riding a bit further on, she stopped and, removing her dress, she attired herself in the boy's clothes, topping off her short curly black locks with the miniature sombrero that belonged to the owner of the suit.

Then she continued her way to the village to which she knew the wagon was bound and where the prisoners were to be kept over that day.

She knew the four rascals would put up at the inn, the proprietor of which was acquainted with them, and would stand in with any piece of rascality they were guilty of.

Reaching the outskirts of the village, she tethered the mule in an open pasture where the animal could get both grass and drink, and made her way to the inn.

Entering the yard, she got into conversation with a boy connected with the place, and learned that the prisoners were in the loft of the barn.

After that she watched her chance to reach them.

Before she related the foregoing the professor had questioned her about the object the rascals had in view with respect to himself and the boys.

She said that the men were agents for a large plantation on the western border of Yucatan, which was worked chiefly by young men held in servitude.

They received a good price for every young man they could kidnap and deliver at the plantation.

The owner preferred foreigners when he could get them, particularly strangers whose disappearance was not likely to attract immediate attention.

Pedro, the guide, stood in with the men and helped put them on the track of suitable victims.

He had picked the two American boys out as fair prey, but as they went about in the professor's company, and he was certain to make trouble if the boys vanished, it was decided to carry him off, too.

She had accidentally discovered these facts at the inn shortly before the expected arrival of the three Americans.

Her presence at the inn was due to the fact that the proprietor of the wine shop and the landlord of the inn were brothers, and the latter had asked for the loan of her services for a few days owing to the illness of his wife.

After she had told everything, the professor expressed to her the grateful appreciation in which her services were held by himself and the boys, and assured her that she would be rewarded.

The girl said that the only reward she expected was the satisfaction of having saved them from a cruel fate, all of which, however, depended on the issue of the predicament they were still in.

As for herself, she knew she would not dare to return to Belize, and so she hoped that, if it were possible, they would take her with them to some place where she would be safe from the vengeance of all concerned in the rascally affair.

The professor assured her that he and the boys would stand

by her after they had made their escape, and would see that she was placed out of harm's way.

During the lull in the proceedings downstairs, Professor Ogden made Jack and Sam acquainted with Estrella's story, and the other facts of the case.

"So the purpose of those scoundrels is to make plantation slaves of us, is it?" said Jack, very much astonished at the revelation. "I thought the days of slavery were over. In any case, I haven't heard of white people being made slaves of, except in certain places where they were arrested for debt and farmed out by authorities till they had worked their debts out."

"Slavery is still in force in a most horrible form in the Peruvian mines," replied the professor, "though it is carried on in disguise."

"Did you ever hear of this plantation slavery before as conducted at present?"

"I confess I never have."

"Well, it ought to be exposed and put down. As Estrella appears to know considerable about it, she would prove a valuable witness, I should think."

At that juncture the girl, who was on the watch at one of the windows, announced to the professor that the rascals were bringing a ladder into the yard, which indicated their purpose of mounting to one of the windows of the loft.

Sam chipped in the information that the men had two ladders, so it was clear they intended to make a simultaneous approach at both windows.

"I'll tell you what we'll do," said Jack. "We'll take a couple of pieces of the rope with which we were bound, make two slipknots and drop the nooses over their heads as they try to enter, and make prisoners of them. With two of them out of the way we ought to be able to go down the stairs and do up the other two."

Jack's suggestion was voted first rate, and he and Sam proceeded to carry the plan into effect.

"We'll give the rascals a surprise that will teach them some respect for American ingenuity," said Jack.

With the nooses ready in their hands the boys took their places at the windows.

The professor stood ready to back Sam up, while Estrella hovered near Jack to give him a hand if necessary.

At that moment there came a loud and vigorous pounding on the trap, accompanied by sundry exclamations, intended to attract and hold the attention of those in the loft about the trap.

The ruse didn't work, however, but under the impression that it did, the two ladders were raised and a rascal ran up to each window.

These windows were merely openings without sashes, and in a brace of shakes a head and a pair of shoulders were thrust in at each.

The eagerness of the rascals to enter the loft worked their downfall.

In each case a noose dropped down about their arms and was jerked tight, after which two pair of hands yanked them sprawling into the loft.

Their astonishment held them speechless long enough for the boys to gag them with a piece of cloth torn from the cloaks.

Their legs were then bound and they were as helpless as their prisoners had previously been.

And while this business was going on in the loft, the pounding was kept up on the trap.

"Now, professor, the way is clear for our exit from the loft," said Jack. "Two of the scamps are out of mischief, and the other two are busy at the trap. We couldn't have a better chance."

Professor Ogden agreed that everything favored a change of base on their part, and they started to make it without loss of time.

The boys slid down one of the ladders in double quick time, then Estrella, in her boyish attire, followed them, and the professor brought up at the rear.

Three saddled horses stood under the shed.

Their riders had stopped for rest and refreshment at the inn.

Jack called his companion's attention to them, and said they must take them.

"I'll take Estrella up behind me, and you people follow us," he said.

They unhitched the animals in short order and mounted as quickly as they could, the girl springing on behind Jack.

At that critical moment the two rascals in the barn came out and were paralyzed to see their three prisoners in the act of making their escape.

They uttered a shout and rushed forward.

Jack dug his heels into his horse and dashed out of the yard, followed by the others, with the alarm sounding behind them.

In the excitement of the escape the fugitives turned in the wrong direction, and instead of taking the road back to Belize they dashed away in the opposite direction.

CHAPTER XI.

IN THE WILDS.

It was a wild ride through the main street of the village, and the rush of the horses' hoofs brought many of the inhabitants to their doors.

"This is where we have it on that bunch of land pirates," Jack shouted back to Sam, who was following close behind, bouncing up and down in the saddle like a rubber ball.

"Bet your life," yelled Sam. "We'll be back in Belize some time after dark."

He didn't dream that they were rushing away from Belize as fast as they could.

The only one who did know it was Estrella, and being unable to talk English, she couldn't pass the fact to Jack.

Besides, she was not anxious to return to that place, for it meant trouble for her unless her new friends were able to protect her, and could not be sure of it.

It was a ride of six miles to the next village, which was on the border of Yucatan.

A river, flashing in the sunshine, flowed beside the hamlet, and the road turned northeastward alongside it.

The party had no recollection of passing along a river in the wagon that morning.

Still, it was quite possible they had done so, for lying bound in the vehicle they had had no view, to speak of, of the surrounding landscape.

The party reined in and stopped for a consultation.

The boys, at any rate, were terribly hungry, and they were anxious to stop at the inn they were confident they would find in the village and get something to eat.

They didn't expect to enjoy a regular meal, as much as they would have relished it, for they dared not spare the time to wait for it, nor had they the price to pay for such a spread.

The hasty pow-wow decided what they would do.

Instead of seeking the inn they would patronize some shop that sold such edibles as were kept in stock.

Anything would go as long as it was food.

They galloped into the village, looking to left and right for the store that sold what they were after.

Estrella understood what they were in search of.

Her sharp eyes made out a kind of cook shop.

She pounded Jack on the back and pointed at the place.

"Here we are!" cried Jack, stopping in front of the shop.

The professor dismounted and went into the place.

Sam went with him.

In a few minutes he came out with two meat pies and a loaf of bread, which he handed to Jack.

Then he went back, and shortly he and the professor came out with a meat pie each, and their pockets full of biscuits.

The party then dashed out of the village by the river road.

When out of sight of the village they dismounted and made a hearty meal.

A little brook close by furnished them with a good drink.

They felt like new beings now, and, remounting, continued their journey.

The road grew worse as they proceeded, until close on to sunset they began to suspect they had taken the wrong turning at the village.

Then Estrella was consulted and the truth came out—they had been riding away from Belize ever since they fled from the inn.

"Holy mackerel!" ejaculated Sam. "We must be a hundred miles from it by this time."

The professor didn't believe they were so far, but he admitted that they were in a bad predicament.

To go back was to invite recapture.

They must go on and make inquiries at the next village, or of the first person they happened to meet.

But darkness overtook them before they saw any signs of civilization.

Indeed, they hadn't seen a house or cultivated fields for a couple of hours.

The country looked barren and wild, and they began to entertain serious misgivings as to what lay before them.

Their horses were fagged out and went slowly.

"It strikes me we'll have to roost out to-night," said Sam.

"There's a wood yonder. We'd better stop there, for our nags are in no shape to carry us further until they have had a good rest."

So the party decided to stop for the night at the edge of the wood.

Fifteen minutes later they reached the wood, and allowing the horses to wander around the grass-covered ground, they picked out a spot among the trees and lay down.

"Are we still in British Honduras?" Jack asked the professor.

"I should judge we were," he answered.

He questioned Estrella.

She could throw no light on the situation except that the village where the party had been imprisoned in the loft of the barn she believed was close to the border of Yucatan.

On that assumption, after roughly guessing how far they had come on horseback, the professor said he guessed they were now in Yucatan.

"This river may be the Hondo, which takes its rise somewhere in British Honduras," he said. "It runs in a north-easterly direction and flows into a large bay directly to the north of Belize. There are towns and villages on the bay, and doubtless between this spot and the bay, where we can easily get our bearings. We will have to apply to the officials for help to see us through, since we are entirely out of money. That is one of the disadvantages we have experienced through the abrupt and unexpected way we left the States."

It was just sunrise when Jack awoke next morning.

Leaving the rest of the party asleep, he started off to find the horses.

They were nowhere in sight on the open country, so he entered the wood.

It was possible to see some distance among the trees, but after half an hour's wandering he found no trace of the animals.

It looked as if the animals had taken themselves off, and that placed them in a serious predicament.

It seemed strange that horses, after a six or seven hour stretch of hard travel, should feel any desire to indulge in additional exercise on their own account.

However, they appeared to be gone, and Jack didn't know what the party was going to do about it.

All the food they had was the remains of their previous day's feast, which would afford them only a rough breakfast.

After that, unless they reached a village, or an outlying farm, they would be in a pretty bad fix.

Jack walked ahead a little further, and then found his way barred by a small creek.

Concealed in the bushes, that grew down to the water's edge, he saw the prow of a boat.

Following up his discovery, his investigations showed him that it was a large canoe provided with paddles, and it carried quite a supply of bananas and other tropical fruits, as well as a quaint-looking earthen jar, the mouth of which was covered with a piece of dried animal skin, secured in place by a kind of fibrous cord.

Jack did not investigate its contents, but he made free to help himself to an armful of the fruit, which he carried back to the place where his friends were.

Sam and the professor were awake and talking together.

They were wondering where Jack had gone.

His appearance with the fruit afforded them a good deal of satisfaction, for the question of rations for the day was worrying them some.

"Where have you been?" asked Sam. "Have you struck a fruit farm?"

Jack explained that while in search of the horses, which he said had disappeared, he had come upon a large canoe holding a supply of fruit in a creek not far from that spot.

"Do you mean to say that the horses are not around?" cried Sam, aghast.

"I am sorry to say that I could find no trace of them anywhere," replied Jack.

"What in creation are we to do without them?"

"As self-preservation is the first law of nature, we will have to take possession of the canoe. There is food enough in it to last us a couple of days, and food is even of more importance to us than the horses. The creek doubtless runs into the river, and the river will probably carry us to some town. On the whole I think we can do better in the canoe than on horseback."

"I wonder who the canoe belongs to?"

"It looks like an Indian canoe. It is long and roomy, and has half a dozen paddles. I never saw a canoe like it, even in a picture."

At this point Estrella woke up.

The party breakfasted and held counsel at the same time.

At the end of the meal Jack guided them to the creek and pointed out the odd-looking canoe.

"It looks decidedly aboriginal," said the professor. I wouldn't be surprised if a party of Chan Santa Cruz Indians have come to this neighborhood in that canoe. Their country lies perhaps fifty to sixty miles to the north."

"The Chan Santa Cruz Indians!" cried Jack. "Those are the chaps who figure in the monastery manuscript of the Silver City."

"The Silver City, I fancy, is a myth," said the professor, "though it is mentioned in many books, particularly old ones, dealing with the history of Yucatan. At any rate, up to the present time, it has not been satisfactorily accounted for."

"I wish we could run against it," said Sam. "The sub-prior of the monastery told us that Don Sebastian's manuscript declares it to be a regular treasure city. That the houses are ornamented with pure silver, both inside and out, and that everything used in the city almost is made of silver."

"That's a beautiful pipe dream, Sam," laughed Jack. "Don Sebastian was bughouse in his upper story. When a man manages to pull through tremendous privation and suffering, as the record says he did, he may be excused if his imagination cuts a wide swath. Dante's 'Inferno,' and Don Sebastian's 'Silver City' are very much alike in regard to their lack of real facts."

Although it was a clear case of appropriating other people's property, the situation was too acute for the party to stand on ceremony, so they got into the canoe, and, with the two boys using the paddles, started down the creek for the river.

CHAPTER XII.

LOST IN THE SWAMP.

It did not take them long to connect with the river, and taking their bearings by the sun they followed the trend of the stream.

Paddling a big canoe that calls for the services of six experienced men at the work is no fool of a job, and the boys gave out under the strain and the heat, and the boat was permitted to go with the current.

The party soon found the heat of the advancing morning decidedly too much for them, and as the canoe appeared to be going slower than at first, probably due to the backing up of the tide from its outlet, they decided to haul up under the first shade they came to and stop there till sundown.

"Whatever paddling is to be done will have to be pulled off at night," said Sam. "It is out of the question for us to labor in the heat of a sizzling furnace."

The professor agreed that Sam's point was well taken, so they presently hauled in on the northern shore of the river amongst a lot of reeds.

Here they were sheltered from the sun, but for all that the heat became almost stifling as the day advanced.

As a consequence they became drowsy, and were soon asleep.

They slept for many hours, during which the tide rose in the river, and, pressing backward, carried the canoe through the reeds into a channel beyond, shaded on either side by a line of trees which flourished with their big roots in the water.

Through this shady lane the current carried them slowly.

The channel ran in a complex way in a series of lagoons.

Blissfully unconscious that the boat was being drawn into a natural and somewhat remarkable trap, the four people slumbered on, for the continuous shade removed a large part of the sun's heat.

The trap in question was a movable section of morass, a long arm, as it were, that rested in the water to some depth, but had no connection with the bottom of the channel.

When the tide was down this blocked the course of the channel at a certain point like a sluice gate, and there was no such thing as getting through it.

The rising tide acted as a lever on it and forced the arm up channel, and then anything floating on the water went through into a complex series of lagoons beyond.

In due time, as the tide receded again, the arm fell back and closed the opening, imprisoning whatever was inside until the next flood.

A person familiar with this phenomena had only to accommodate himself to it to return by the way he came, but a person unaware of its existence found himself in a trap, and was likely to waste his energy in fruitless efforts to escape from the labyrinth.

And so the canoe with the three Americans and the Spanish

girl glided on up the channel, slipped by the open arm and went on its way.

It finally caught among the rank grass and came to a rest. About four o'clock Jack awoke, and Sam followed suit.

They were somewhat hungry again, and they ate some of the fruit.

The professor and Estrella presently joined them.

The former investigated the contents of the earthen jar and found that it was filled with a sweet kind of wine similar to what they had been served with at the monastery.

As the sun was well down toward the horizon, they decided to resume their way.

They pushed the boat out from its nest of grass, but instead of finding themselves on the river they saw only a narrow stream.

"Where in thunder have we got to?" said Sam.

"Search me!" replied Jack, "the canoe must have floated somewhere while we slept. It's up to us to find the river. It can't be a great ways from here."

They paddled about, entering new places every few moments, but no river could they find.

"We seem to be lost in this watery maze," said Jack. "What do you think we had better do, professor?"

"As we are bound east, the only thing I see we can do is to paddle in that direction," replied Professor Ogden. "Keep the sun at your back and go on."

The channel was so intricate that there was no such thing as keeping to any one point of the compass.

The bow of the canoe was continually swerving to the right or to the left, but in the main the craft worked to the east.

Darkness came on, and without the sun to post them as to their course, they had no idea how much progress they were making in the direction they wanted to go.

To make matters worse, the sky clouded up and they saw that a thunder-storm was approaching.

"We're having tough luck," growled Sam.

No one disputed his statement, their luck was certainly on the slump.

An hour later they were in the grip of a terrific wind and electrical storm, the like of which the Americans had never witnessed before.

Estrella, though familiar with them, was awfully frightened, and clung to Jack for protection as if it were possible for them to save her if a thunderbolt hit the canoe.

The thunder seemed to rend the firmament into bits, while the lightning was dazzling in its brilliancy.

Nor was the wind far behind in taking a hand in the general rumpus.

It was like a Western tornado, and drove the boat before it from one channel into another.

The boys worked hard with their paddles to keep the canoe head on, for they knew that if the wind gripped them broadside on they would be quickly upset.

If luck had really deserted them, that night would have marked their finish.

The storm lasted for about three hours, then quit business as suddenly as it started in.

The canoe was driven miles and miles away from the river and deep into a strange, impenetrable marsh.

When the sun rose it found the party, particularly the boys, so exhausted that they could only let matters take their course.

The grass grew six or seven feet high on all sides, and trees shot out of the swamp.

Wherever one showed itself the party was sure to find a small hillock of soft ground which the canoe bumped its nose upon.

On one of the trees they hauled up, to remain during the heat of the day.

The branches afforded the protection of a sunshade.

The water in the marsh was not at all stagnant, but it had little tidal movement.

It was far beyond the influence of the rise and fall of the river.

After eating a meal off the fruit and maize cakes, and washing them down with a drink of wine, the party went to sleep in poor spirits, for the fruit that was left (and there was still quite a lot of it) was overripe and would have to be thrown overboard, which would leave them only the cakes and the wine to subsist on.

They knew they were lost in a marsh, the extent of which they had no idea of, and they might die of starvation before they found their way out of it.

The professor did his best to keep up the spirits of his young companions, for he knew the only hope of the party lay in maintaining a fighting spirit.

They slept through the hottest part of the day and awoke to find the canoe in the same position.

They made their dinner off one cake apiece and some fruit that was not yet spoiled, and while they satisfied their hunger they talked the situation over again.

There was really nothing to do but push straight ahead and see where they would come out.

Of course, the serious part of the business was the lack of provisions.

What they had would not last very long, and it was vitally urgent that they get out of the swamp before they exhausted their little store of cakes and the wine.

The boys took up the paddles and worked steadily for half an hour, when they were relieved by the professor and Estrella.

Thus they alternated throughout the night, under a bright, starlit sky, pushing their way through the grass and avoiding the muddy banks on which the trees grew.

Just at sunrise the canoe ran under a bunch of overhanging foliage and bumped against the solid ground.

Jack sprang out and took a look around.

Instead of a barren looking prospect, which they had expected to encounter, he saw a luxuriant vegetation on every side.

A short distance away he saw a grove of banana trees, the long hanging leaves partly concealing the bunches of fruit that was ripening in the sun.

Jack felt like shouting.

He hurriedly communicated the news to the rest.

All landed, and the canoe was pulled out of the water so it would not float away.

Jack and Sam rushed to the grove and returned with a big bunch of bananas between them, a part of which was already fit to eat, while the rest would ripen by degrees.

After eating their breakfast it was arranged that the professor and the boys should investigate the immediate neighborhood while Estrella remained by the canoe.

The big tree beneath which the little craft rested made a good guide-post, so the three Americans had no fear that they would not be able to retrace their steps to the spot.

They started off expecting to find a house somewhere around, for the banana grove showed signs of cultivation.

It was quite an extensive grove, and cut off all view ahead.

Passing through it, they came suddenly upon what appeared to be the ruins of a stone building of ancient aspect.

The professor viewed it with much interest, declaring that it greatly resembled ancient Aztec architecture.

A closer examination confirmed this impression.

They entered the building through a doorway which showed no indication of ever having had a door, and found themselves in a flagged reception hall.

This was roofed with blocks of the same dirty white material that formed the outside walls.

Here and there a block was not much discolored, and it showed a dull, silvery face.

The roof was supported by a big center column of the same material, resting upon a block of substantial size.

The flagstones were of the same kind of stone.

From this hall they passed into a square room open to the sky.

The most prominent object in it was a tall image, as high as the wall, which the professor declared to be of Aztec workmanship.

As Professor Ogden and the two boys were examining the interior of the roofless room, a sudden commotion arose above.

The figure of a frightened boy came rushing toward the opening.

He leaped down just as three natives appeared in pursuit.

CHAPTER XVII.

CONCLUSION.

To say that the professor and the two boys were startled, as well as astonished, would be putting it mildly.

The newcomer, who was bareheaded, with typical Irish features, landed right in their midst, and was saved from falling by Jack, who caught him in his arms.

The fugitive, whose eyes stuck out with terror, struggled to release himself from Jack's grasp.

It was clear that he believed he had landed among another bunch of his enemies.

"Hold on; don't get excited. What's the trouble?" asked Jack.

At the sound of a language familiar to his ears the fugitive quieted down and stared at Jack.

"Mother of Moses!" he cried, eagerly. "Am I dramin' or is it frinds yez are?"

"Of course we're friends. Who are you and why are those Indians after you?" asked Jack.

"Who am I? Barney O'Toole is me name, and it's Irish I am. Ye'd better get away from this neighborhood as fast as ye can, or it's mincemeat thim Injuns'll be after makin' of us, so they will, bad cess to the bunch of them. Look at thim up there. Sure I dunno what's stoppin' thim from jumpin' down and nabbin' all of us, unless it's because they're so astonished at seein' yez here that they're temporarily deprived of sinse of motion. If yez would escape wid whole skins yez won't wait till they recover thimselves," said Barney, making a move toward the door.

Three lightly-garbed, black-haired natives were gazing down at them.

One of them held a club and a second a rude spear, but they made no hostile demonstration.

The professor addressed them in Spanish.

They evidently understood that language, for the unarmed one made a reply.

His tones were guttural, and the professor did not comprehend what he said.

The three natives held a hurried consultation and then disappeared from view.

"They've gone to get more of their frinds," said Barney. "Let us get a move on while the walkin' is good. If yez have a boat, sure it's a fine toime to make use of it. Come on, now. I escaped by the skin of me teeth, and I wish no further acquaintance wid thim copper-colored gentlemin."

The young Irishman's tone and manner was insistent, and as matters did not look particularly cheerful, the party decided to return to where they had left Estrella and the canoe.

"Begorra, it's lucky for me yez were on the spot, or I'd have seen me finish," said Barney, as they left the building.

"Explain who those Indians are, and how you got into trouble with them," said Jack.

"Thim are the Chan Santa Cruz, and they live on this island."

"Is this an island?"

"If it isn't thin I don't know what it is, begorra, for it's entirely surrounded by water and bog, or swamp, if that plazes ye better. It's about a mile wan way and siveral miles the other, and in the cinter of it is what they call the Silver City."

"The Silver City!" cried Jack, in some excitement. "Then there really is such a place?"

"If there isn't thin me eyes deceaved me."

"You have seen it?"

"Faith, I have."

"At close quarters?"

"Too close for the good of me health."

"Were you a prisoner and were making your escape when you came upon us?"

"Was I a prisoner? Yez kin take your Bible oath I was."

"How came you to get into their hands?"

"It's a long story, so it is," said Barney. "I was runnin' away from a big plantation thirty or forty miles from here, where I'd been cooped up for four long months, workin' like a nagur for pay thot niver came, like the rist of the poor fellers on the place. Sure it was nothin' better than slavery. The only dacint thing thot kin be said of the place was thot the grub was good. But who wants to worruk from sunrise to sunset for his atin' and slapin'?"

"That must be the place we were headed for, professor," said Jack.

"Yez were headed for thot place?" cried the Irish lad. "Are yez acquainted wid the boss of the ranch?"

"No. We were kidnaped from Belize by a bunch of scoundrels who are agents for the plantation. The idea was to coop us up on the place, and make Sam and me labor the same way as yourself; but what they expected to do with the professor I couldn't say. They took him along to prevent him from making trouble over our disappearance."

"And the rascals ye are here is because yez made your escape from the rascals, I suppose?"

"You've hit it off right; but we wouldn't have got away if it hadn't been for that girl you see yonder seated in the canoe under the big tree."

"Girl, is it? Why, thot's a b'y, or me eyes deceave me."

"She's disguised as a boy."

"Disguised! Faith, the disguise is a good wan."

In a few moments they joined Estrella and she was made acquainted with Barney.

As the Irish lad insisted that it was dangerous to remain on the island, as he called it, they pushed the canoe into the water, secured another big bunch of bananas, green ones, this time, that would ripen fast enough in the heat, and pushed off.

Barney told them that there was a channel on the opposite side which was open through the swamp, and by following it they ought to reach the river.

Jack and Sam were eager to learn all Barney had found out concerning the Silver City.

He said he had been a week there.

After escaping from the plantation he had tramped it to the river, where he found a boat and started to make the rest of his way by water.

In some way he turned into the tributary which connected with the channel that ran through the swamp.

Following the channel, when he got to it, he had fetched up at the island, where he was nabbed by two of the natives and taken before the head man of the city.

He was confined in a house and waited on by several of the natives in turn.

They gave him all he could eat, and a good couch of dried rushes to sleep on, and, on the whole, treated him first rate, he admitted, but it was clear they did not intend to let him depart.

But Barney had no desire to stay, even if he was accorded the fat of the land in exchange for his freedom, so he played 'possum and effected his escape from the house that morning.

He was soon missed and search was made for him.

He eluded the searchers for some time by hiding in the next house.

From that he slipped away to another one, and finally fetched up in a sort of religious building at one end of the city.

Barney said that the big room was filled with large and small statues made of pure silver, apparently, and that all the decorations of the place were of the same metal.

He also said that the eyes of the statues were filled in with big jewels of all colors.

His description made the mouths of Jack and Sam water.

What a treasure was going to waste in the midst of this great swamp!

They slowly paddled along in the grass and reeds until the heat made them desist for a while.

From the direction of the invisible island they heard no sounds.

Barney told them there was no doubt that the natives were searching for the bunch of them around the neighborhood where they had shown themselves.

The party made a meal off the bananas and some of the wine, and remained at their anchorage till late in the afternoon.

Then they started on again.

It was about sundown when they opened up the channel through the thinning grass.

They came to a hasty stop when they saw several canoes filled with natives rowing in toward the island.

Darkness finally fell and they made another start.

In the gloom, however, they got off their course and ran up a sort of creek, where they fetched up against a landing made of huge white blocks.

Before them rose the dark shadow of a singularly-shaped building.

"'Tis the temple, begorra," whispered Barney. "Sure I didn't know there was a waterway up to the back dure."

There wasn't a light nor a sound in the vicinity.

"Faith, there's slathers of food in a small room behind the big wan wid the images," said Barney. "It makes me mouth water to think of it. If yez are game to vinture up there, maybe we kin fetch some away wid us, for we'll nade it before we kin reach the first town on our way to the say."

Professor Ogden opposed taking the risk.

Jack and Sam, however, were eager to follow Barney, whose real object was to try and capture some of the jewels he had seen.

They waited a good half hour, but nothing occurred to indicate danger.

Then the three boys stepped on the landing, which appeared to be a private one, for the use of those connected with the temple.

Like three shadows they glided toward the back door of the temple, which was open.

Led by Barney, they entered a short stone passage, and this conducted them to the room where the food supplies were kept.

Not a soul was around to interfere with them.

There were several dim lights in the room, which burned all the time, for the building had no windows.

The boys were thus able to see the silver statues with their jeweled eyes.

Barney tried to dig the sapphires out of the eyes of a small statue, but found they were too securely stuck in, probably with a tenacious sort of cement.

They returned to the food room, and while loading up with supplies an idea struck Jack.

He slipped back into the statue room and went to the rear of the base of the largest statue.

He had previously noticed that there seemed to be a slab door in it.

He now investigated it and found there was.

With the point of his jack-knife he succeeded in prying it open, and there stood a jar filled with all kinds of precious stones.

He tried to lift it out, but found he couldn't budge it.

Then he filled all his pockets with the gems and, spying a small, empty basket near by, he filled that to the brim and hurried from the room.

He found Sam and Barney waiting for him with baskets loaded with food stuff.

He showed them the treasure he had found, and they nearly dropped.

"Come, let's hurry back to the canoe and get away as soon as we can," he said.

This they did at a double-quick rate.

The professor was amazed at the display of wealth Jack had got away with.

No time was lost in paddling away out of the creek into the swamp, and pushing over to the side opposite the island, they shot out into the channel, and under the guidance of Barney they paddled as hard as they could all through the night, with short intervals of rest.

As they had plenty of paddles, all hands got busy with them.

They entered the tributary stream at length, and before sunrise reached the river.

Shortly after sunrise they hid themselves in the grass along the southern bank, and after a good breakfast went to sleep.

Late in the afternoon they resumed their way.

Two days later they came in sight of a town close to the bay.

Jack and Sam took off their shirts and tied up the jewels in them, because it was not deemed prudent to expose the treasure.

They held out six of the smallest stones, which were handed to the professor.

On their arrival at the British seaport they found the Albatross at her wharf loaded and ready to sail for New York.

Captain Jenkins was waiting to recover his three passengers, over whose strange disappearance the authorities were busying themselves.

A high jinks was held aboard the schooner on their arrival, and their story aroused considerable astonishment.

As Estrella strongly objected to being left in Belize, it was decided to take her to New York, and during the short trip she and Jack were almost constantly together, though neither could understand the other's language.

On their arrival home the boys and the professor were received as ones from the grave, for since they were numbered among the missing not a clew had been found to their whereabouts, though the catboat was found in the creek, and the fact that it was tied there in security, and ship-shape in every way, caused profound wonder as to what had become of the professor and the two boys.

The jewels were appraised at \$150,000.

Of this sum Jack took half, and the rest was equally divided between Professor Ogden, Sam, Barney and Estrella.

At Jack's request his family adopted the Spanish girl as a member of the family, for he declared that some day he intended to marry her.

Jack and Sam went to Princeton on time and easily passed their examination.

They became persons of some importance among the rest of the boys as soon as it became known that for a time they and Professor Ogden had figured Among the Missing, and that they had captured a part of the treasure of the Silver City.

Next week's issue will contain "LUCKY LARRY; OR, THE BOY WHO MADE WALL STREET TAKE NOTICE."

SEND POSTAL FOR OUR FREE CATALOGUE.

CURRENT NEWS

An Italian, Gaetano Sangiorgi, has been sentenced in Paris to a year's imprisonment for biting off the end of the nose of a girl whom he loved but who had ceased to love him. The Italian invited the girl to appear at a restaurant. For the last time he appealed to her to listen to his suit. She refused. He drew her toward him as if to kiss her, but instead bit off the end of her nose.

Last spring a traveling cigar salesman purchased a Scotch collie from Cleve Adams, of Monmouth, Ill. It was shipped to the home of the new owner in Pittsburgh, Pa. Recently Mr. Adams heard a noise at the door. On opening it, he was greeted by his old pet, wagging his tail. The dog had traveled more than one thousand miles. He appeared tired and his feet showed signs of hardship.

To escape working a sentence on the county farm, near Little Rock, Ark., Robert Howe attempted to cut off his toes with a razor he had concealed upon his person. When Howe was photographed for identification several weeks ago he attempted to foil efforts of detectives to obtain a good likeness by removing his right eye of glass and smashing it on the floor. Howe is said to be wanted in Omaha, Lincoln and Chicago for alleged safe-cracking jobs.

Phineas E. Crapo, foreman of the farm of Samuel P. Colt, president of the United States Rubber Company, Bristol, R. I., suffered a broken left leg, a fractured skull and other injuries when an automobile which he was driving on the Colt farm shot off the private drive over a three-foot sea wall and into Narragansett Bay. Fishermen saw Crapo floundering in the water, the machine partly submerged, and went to his rescue. The auto was pulled out of the water by a yoke of oxen on the Colt place.

Five hundred dollars a week for one fisherman is the average earned by salmon fishers who have begun to return from the banks to Tacoma, Wash., with shipload after shipload of their catches and their faces wreathed in smiles over what they declared was the most successful season in history. Jack Anich, one of the dozen of the salmon fishers of Tacoma, said that during the comparatively short period, four weeks, which they are allowed to fish, no less than 2,000,000 cases of salmon had been caught in Puget Sound and British Columbia waters, valued at \$15,000,000. Tacoma and Gig Harbor fishermen are bringing \$750,000 worth of salmon to Old Town alone.

Local postal employees at Seattle were treated to a surprise recently at finding in the parcel post mail, marked "fragile," a canary. The tiny songster was sent from Mount Vernon by parcel post and special delivery for a resident of Capitol Hill and gave no sign of not enjoying its imprisonment in Uncle Sam's mail until preparations were made for sending it on the last leg of its journey. Then it had the flutters so badly that the parcel post clerk

was about ready to hurl himself through the window until he peered through the airholes of the container to find that he had a wee canary. Although the sending of live birds through the parcel post is not permitted, the canary was safely delivered to its new owner the next day.

Samuel Gompers will rule the American Federation of Labor for another year. After re-electing him by a practically unanimous vote and selecting Philadelphia as the 1914 convention city over Fort Worth, Tex., the federation convention adjourned. The attempt of the insurgents to defeat Gompers was futile. Only one delegate opposed Gompers's re-election, Delegate Knerr, of Salt Lake, who was instructed. James Duncan, opposed, was elected first vice-president. John Mitchell was succeeded as second vice-president by James O'Connell, ex-third vice-president. Mitchell and the United Mine Workers failed in their efforts to elect John White, their president, to fill the vacancy. He was elected seventh vice-president.

During the six days after deer season in Massachusetts, which ended at dark November 22, it is estimated by the Fish and Game Commissioners that 1,500 bucks and does have been killed. The number of hunters in the chase was greater than on any of the five previous days. Reports received by the Commissioners up to noon nearly equalled last year's record of 1,260. With so many gunners in the field the absence of reports of fatal accidents is considered remarkable. The Commissioners believe that the law prohibiting the use of rifles and revolvers has protected the majority of careful sportsmen from the careless minority. Only four accidents had been reported. The last occurred November 21, when James Albano, of Springfield, was shot by an unknown hunter at Chester.

The landing of field guns and munitions of war on shores which vessels cannot approach closely is one of the exciting tasks for the men on the warships of the world's great navies, says *Popular Mechanics*. The maneuver is especially necessary in the navies of the colonial power which must be in readiness to land fighting forces on any of the unapproachable shores of their colonies. British, German and French sailors have long been trained in making such landings and since the United States has become a colonial power the crews of American battleships are likely to be called upon for similar service. The battleship or transport carrying the guns anchors as near the shore as possible and a cable is stretched from the vessel's deck to a tripod derrick on shore. A two-wheeled trolley, from which are suspended the various parts of the guns, is drawn along the cable by a rope running to the men on shore. The guns are dismounted and several trips are necessary to land all the parts of one gun. The most thrilling part of the work is carried on by the men who ride on the load to keep it from swaying or becoming unfastened from the trolley.

YOUNG TOM BROWN

OR,

THE BOY WHO KNEW HIS BUSINESS

By ED. KING

(A SERIAL STORY.)

CHAPTER XX (continued).

"And did he?" broke in Tom, immensely excited. "Did Boggs steal the money from the bank himself? Did he tell you that?"

"No, he didn't tell it, but of course it was so," replied Ned. "Now listen till I finish my story, for there isn't much of it left to tell."

"When I ran out of that room I went down the stairs that lead to the cellar, as you know. Well, sir, Charley was there with a spade in his hand. He had set the house afire and buried the money so that he could give me the bluff and come back and get it some time by himself. I jumped on him, or rather for him, for I didn't get him. He dashed out by the cellar door and I after him. I chased him back into the swamp until we came to that pond; mebbe you know it?"

"Bell's pond?" said Tom. "Yes, go on."

"That's where my story ends," replied Ned. "When Charley reached the pond and saw that he was cut off he started to run around it. His foot slipped and—and—well, he went in, Tom Brown, and he never came out again, and there the bank money lies buried somewhere in that cellar for somebody to find. I can't, for I've tried. That's my story. Now you keep your word and let me go."

"By gracious, I believe you have spoken the truth," said Tom. "Well, it's not much to me. Not half as much as this confession. Now I know how Boggs came to be tied up in that room and what he was doing there the other night. Well, you shall go free, Ned Merwin, for Kate's sake and the sake of your father, but don't you ever cross my path again; if you do I'll have no mercy on you, now I give you that straight."

CHAPTER XXI

STILL IN TROUBLE WITH THE MEN.

Morning was just dawning in the east when Young Tom Brown and Arthur Penrose left the hut.

Tom Brown knew his business.

He felt that to attempt to find their way out of the old quarry with their prisoners in the dark could only be done at the risk of their lives.

So when daylight began to come Buck was aroused and, greatly to his surprise, found himself a prisoner.

He was meek enough and seemed to have a wholesome fear of his own revolver in the hands of Tom.

So the boys marched the prisoners out of the quarry by the road which led to the level above and when they reached it Ned Merwin was set free.

He slunk away without making any trouble, and the boys marched Halloran and Buck to the nearest railway station, where their story was told.

Leaving the prisoners in charge of Arthur and the station agent, Tom hurried up into the village and fetched the constable, who took them in charge.

The fact that they had been concerned in the attempt to wreck the train was enough and the whole town turned out to help the constable take them to the nearest jail.

Meanwhile Tom and Arthur took the next train to Dimsdale.

Their fame had been telegraphed ahead of them by the towerman at the station and there was a great crowd to meet them, for by some misunderstanding of the dispatch it was expected that the prisoners would be brought there.

Some cheered Tom as he came off the train, but others shouted "scabs" and various unpleasant things. So, to avoid trouble, Tom and Arthur jumped into the depot hack and were driven rapidly up to Mr. Brown's, where Tom had to tell the whole story, of course.

"It's a great outrage, Tom," said Brown, senior, "but we must not give in. The union sent that man Halloran here and they are responsible for his dirty work. These St. Louis men have been hired with them. I maintain that even if the union calls the strike off these men must not be discharged."

"Indeed, you needn't be so serious about it, father," said Tom. "I haven't the faintest idea of discharging one of them so long as they do their work well. I know my business and I mean to fight for my rights to the last gasp. Now I think I'll go up in town and see what Roebuck has done about those men."

Arthur had gone home meanwhile, so Tom started up on the street alone.

He had another errand to perform before he started in on business, and he expected to have to look up Kate Merwin to do it, but as luck would have it he was saved that trouble, for he met her on the street just coming out of Barnes & Beasley's drygoods store.

"Oh, Tom! What a lot of trouble you have had!" exclaimed Kate, seizing his hand.

"Lots of it, Kate, lots of it; but a fellow must expect trouble," replied Tom. "I suppose you have heard about those two train wreckers Arthur and I captured in the Buzby sink?"

"As though everybody had not heard of it," replied Kate. "Of course I have, and—"

"Stop a minute, Kate. There were actually three captured. We let one go."

"Let him go—why?"

"On your account, Kate."

"On my account, Tom!"

Kate turned deathly pale.

"Oh, you don't mean—was it—was it my brother, Tom?"

"It was! Don't look so downcast, Kate. I have got good news for you. Before I let Ned Merwin go I captured this. See, Kate, a confession, signed before a notary. It refers to the Dunmore murder and— Kate! Kate! Bear up for your father's sake!"

Poor Kate almost fainted. She would have fallen if Tom had not thrown his arm around her and held her up.

"My father—does it clear him?" she gasped.

"It does!"

"Thank heaven! Ned always claimed that he saw father kill Uncle Nicholas through the window, and—and, oh, Tom, did Ned do the dreadful deed?"

"He says not," replied Tom. "Take the confession to your father, Kate. At all events, it will free him from further blackmail, and that is one great point gained. Now I must hurry to your father's new house and see what has been done with those men."

Tom found a most satisfactory state of affairs when he reached Dr. Merwin's new residence.

The building was swarming with men and work was going on as though nothing had occurred.

A few of the strikers hung about and said "scabs" when Tom hurried past them.

"Not a scab among them, boys," replied Tom, turning and facing them boldly. "All good union men."

"We'll chase them out of town, just the same!" cried one.

"We'll do you up some night, young fellow," cried another; but Tom, without paying any attention to them, went on the new building to look for Roebuck.

He did not find him there, but he did on the Jones Block, where a full gang was now hard at work.

The foreman shook his hand warmly.

"Well, you have done a big thing, Tom," he said. "Everything is going finely. These men seem to know their business and are willing to work. I have distributed them among all the jobs and am trying to rush things ahead as fast as I can, but I look for trouble from the strikers just the same."

"Let it come. I'll face it," replied Tom. "Meanwhile read this. It will show where that man Halloran stands."

It was the walking delegate's confession, and after Roebuck had read it Tom put it in the mail enclosed in a letter to the Chicago union.

This settled the strike.

The Chicago union promptly replied, repudiating the action of Mr. Mike Halloran and saying that the strike had been ordered off.

They requested Tom to discharge his St. Louis gang, but they did not insist upon it.

They had other and more important matters to fight out with the St. Louis union and did not care to get into a quarrel with them over the affairs of a country town.

The result of all this was just what might have been expected. The men came swarming around Brown & Son begging to be taken back and Tom was besieged with applications for work.

He put on such of the old men as he could use and wired to St. Louis that he needed no more, but he positively refused to discharge one of those already engaged.

For several days matters went on swimmingly.

It was during this time that Dr. Merwin sent for Tom, told him the whole story of the Dunmore murder and thanked him most heartily for what he had done.

"Count upon me as a friend forever, Tom," he said. "For years I have believed myself guilty of my brother-in-law's murder. You have taken a great load of care from my heart."

This conversation took place on the morning of the third day after Tom's return.

On the morning of the fourth, when he went up to Dr. Merwin's new house, he saw a great crowd of the idle workmen standing around.

"Here he comes!" they shouted. "Here comes the boss! We'll give him one more chance to bounce the scabs, boys! Let him come on!"

They opened a passage in the crowd for Tom to pass.

It was a threatening situation, but Tom walked boldly into their midst in spite of the fact that he plainly saw that every man held a brick in his hand.

CHAPTER XXII.

TOM HOLDS HIS OWN.

Young Tom Brown was only a boy, but he was a boy who knew his business, as we have had occasion to remark before.

Tom's business was now that of a contractor, on decidedly a large scale.

Tom's business was to employ labor, skilled and unskilled, and he felt—yes, he knew—that if he could not be absolute master of that labor, for which his money paid, he was not fit to be in business at all.

He must make his men at once respect, love and fear him, if such a combination was possible.

Tom thought it was.

The love part would have to come later, but the respect and fear were to be earned right now, when a burly bricklayer planted himself directly in the boy's path, as he walked between the double row of angry men.

"Hold on there, boss," he said. "No so fast. I want a job; will you hire me?"

"Yes, when I have work for you to do, I will," replied Tom. "You were always a good man, Riordan. Step out of my way and let me pass!"

"I'll not let you pass until you have given me a job, and every other man in this crowd a job!" roared Riordan, raising the hand which held the brick threateningly.

This was all Tom was waiting for. He was a skillful wrestler, as we have said before, having had long practice in the Dimsdale gymnasium, and he felt that the time had come to show his strength now.

(To be continued.)

FACTS WORTH READING

STUCK IN PITCH.

Several barrels of pitch had been unloaded in a vacant lot, in Hopkinsville, Ky., and Inez Moore, 12 years old, was playing on top of them. She did not notice that the head of one barrel was off, and stepped into the sticky mass, which had been heated by the sun. She sank to her knees, and all efforts to extricate her failed for over an hour. Finally she was worked out of the pitch, until her shoe laces could be cut, and she could pull her feet out. The shoes were never recovered, and a garden fork and ax that were used in trying to chop her out are also still firmly fastened in the pitch.

ARLINGTON STATION RECEIVES RADIO-TELEGRAPH TIME SIGNALS FROM EIFFEL TOWER.

After many weeks of labor and elaborate preparations, which included sending an American commission to Paris and the coming of a French commission to Washington, the naval observatory here has succeeded in receiving the time signals from the observatory of Paris by radio-telegraphy via the Eiffel Tower station there and the Arlington station here. The signals are for longitude determination. The signals have been flashed back and forth for three weeks, but without much success until last night, when the beats of the Paris clock were received here. The beats were compared with those of the Washington clock for some minutes by the method of "coincidences."

The season of the year when conditions are best for radio work is now coming on, and it is expected that the work planned by the experts will be carried on without interruption.

INDIANS SHOWED GOOD JUDGMENT IN SELECTION OF LOCATIONS.

The historical records of the development of western Canada contain many interesting narrations in connection with the Hudson's Bay trading posts.

The company, which was established in 1760, by a charter of Charles II., had the monopoly of the fur trade from Lake Superior and Hudson Bay out to the Pacific. The whole territory was divided into districts and the company employed at one time 3,000 traders, agents, voyagers, besides many thousands of Indians.

Each district had its trading post the site of which depended upon the physical characteristics of the territory, and in the selection of these sites the advice of the aboriginal guides was invariably taken. It was only natural that the posts should have been built in those parts offering the easiest access to the surrounding country and it is a curious thing wherever those old warrior chiefs selected a site it has become or is destined to be the great centre of that particular district.

Fort Garry, Winnipeg, Edmonton, Calgary, Fort Fraser, Vancouver, Victoria and Prince Rupert are prominent among the cities which have sprung up in the identical positions chosen close upon 250 years ago by the Northern American natives.

The trails which in those days naturally led over the easiest grades to the territory surrounding these posts are to-day in many instances the highways and byways which are opening up the large agricultural and industrial centres of the West. The annals of the times show that land in close proximity to the Hudson's Bay posts at one time or another changed hands for a mere song.

DEATH VALLEY.

The recent death of Peter A. Busch, a Colorado miner, in Death Valley, recalls many instances of the treachery of that portion of California which was denominated by the early tribal Indians as the "Valley of Fire."

The Piutes, Washoes and other tribes in early days condemned their criminals to the country surrounding Death Valley. When an outlaw Indian violated the most sacred laws of his tribe he was condemned to the "Valley of Fire," where he was expected soon to perish.

Of the hundreds of bodies found in Death Valley, where men perished from heat and thirst, they are almost universally naked to the waist. The trail made by the men before death also shows a circuitous course.

At a certain stage, after being attacked by the heat, the person begins to run and claw at his breast. First his hat is abandoned. Then he begins to claw at his shirt, and finally tears it from him.

Then he turns in a circuitous route and narrows the circuit until finally he falls exhausted in a heap and never rises again. Delirium comes on instantly.

It is at this point that the victim begins to tear at his upper garments and run. It is presumed that the terrible suffering from the heat and thirst feels like a load on his lungs and makes breathing difficult, and that the victim imagines by running he is getting away from the thing and that in clawing off his upper garments he is releasing the weight.

Scientists who have visited Death Valley in warm weather and had a touch of the heat state that the extraordinary effect of the heat there is caused by the peculiar situation of Death Valley. It is from 100 to 400 feet below sea level and is shut in on all sides by high mountains.

The Panamints range shuts out the moist air from the Pacific Ocean, and the Funeral and Grapevine ranges shut out the wind from the slight vegetation on the eastern side, so that the only wind that reaches Death Valley and the atmosphere of that region is the dryest of all places on earth; that it absorbs from every living thing, both human and vegetable, every particle of moisture.

This is illustrated by the fact that at certain places in Death Valley, when the thermometer is at its highest—often 137 degrees in the shade—a man never can satiate his thirst. As soon as he takes the canteen from his lips the thirst returns just as strong as ever.

When the system is drained of all moisture the brain yields, the victim's eyes stare like a madman's and he runs his circuitous course to death.

AN IRISH ROBINHOOD

OR,

THE HEROES OF THE BRIDGE

By GASTON GARNE

(A SERIAL STORY)

CHAPTER VIII (continued).

"Shoot again, fools, and you will slay the maiden. Burst in on us, and my sword will pierce her breast."

"Villain," cried De Courcey, "if you harm the maiden, we will kill you by inches."

"Bah!" cried Otto. "We are masters now, and we will remain so. The maiden dies if you attempt to burst in again."

Then the cunning rascal gave some hasty instructions to his brothers in their own tongue, and they darted into the back room.

Otto still maintained his position before the window, holding the female form before him, while the two friends outside consulted in low but excited tones.

"What is to be done with the wretches?" asked De Courcey, who was almost frantic with rage and apprehension.

"We'll consult with the robber dogs, of course, and treat them as they deserve when they release the lady. Let me speak."

Then Barney went to the window, saying:

"Friends, don't be acting like fools, and listen to fair terms."

"What terms do you offer?" asked Otto. "Remember, there are three of us to your two, and we are not cowards."

"Release the young maiden, and we will let you all go in peace."

"What if we refuse?"

"We will slay you like dogs. A few minutes more, and I will have men enough here to tear the house down over your heads."

"Bah to that, I say. If you had friends at hand you would have summoned them with your horn ere now. We know you."

"If you do know us you must know that you will suffer dearly if you injure the maiden. Release her and go free."

"She is worth a great ransom to us alive, yet will we slay her on the spot if you persist in attacking us," replied the Dane, as he retreated toward the back room, still keeping the female form before him. "I will not resign her without gold."

Otto then slipped into the back room, and closed it after him.

"Let us in through the window at the dogs," said young De Courcey, who was still fuming with rage.

"It is not large enough, and they would have at us with advantage if we would. Let us assail the door together."

The two strong men flung themselves against the door with tremendous force, and it flew open before them.

Without pausing a second, they both dashed into the dark room, De Courcey crying:

"Una, Una, where are you?"

A deep groan from the back room was his only answer.

"This way," he cried, groping his way with the sword before him. "Where are the northern dogs? Where are you, Una?"

The taper was out in the back room, and the young man soon stumbled over a human form, but not a hand was raised to strike at him.

Bending down on the instant, De Courcey grasped a female form, and he cried, in thrilling, vengeful tones:

"The dastards have murdered the dear one! A light—a light! No, sir, she breathes; her blood is warm. The villains have bound her mouth."

"They have fled," cried Barney, who had just stumbled over Fingal. "Who have we here?"

De Courcey tore the gag from the mouth of the person he was holding in his arms, and then a voice responded to him, crying:

"I am not Miss Una, sir, but old Mother Mag. The villains have carried her off the back way."

Barney of the Bow struck a light with his flint at the moment, and recognizing the giant, he cried:

"'Tis Fingal, as I am a living man, and he is injured sorely. My poor—

"Don't mind me, but away after the villains," muttered the giant, as the gag was torn from his mouth.

As the giant spoke he pointed to the back door, and added:

"They are after your horses."

De Courcey was already out in quest of the robbers, and Barney dashed after him, as he yelled:

"To the wood, to the wood! The dogs are after our good steeds to bear away the young lady. Death to the villains! To the rescue, my brave, young friend!"

"To the rescue!" yelled De Courcey, as they both dashed to the wood.

The active outlaw soon outstripped the young man, who was still encumbered with his heavy armor, and he was the first to reach the spot where they had left the horses.

"Gone—gone!" yelled the outlaw, in half-frantic tones, while the sound of the galloping horses could be heard in the distance. "The blamed knaves have outwitted us. Off with your armor, and we will be after them on foot."

CHAPTER IX.

THE FATAL FORD BELOW ATHLONE.

When the English found that they could not force a passage across the bridge at Athlone, they continued to batter away at the fortifications and castle, opening still wider breaches day by day.

The English commander also sought to find a ford across the fast-flowing river whereby he could cross to attack the town and the battered fortifications.

The main army, under St. Ruth, was encamped some few miles behind the town, and the French commander took matters very easy, feeling assured that his enemy could not cross the river to attack the place.

While the people of the town were still rejoicing over the successful defense of the bridge, one of its heroes was pining in suspense over the loss of his beloved one.

A few evenings after the abduction of Una Fitzgerald young De Courcey was seated in a rude tent in a wood below the town, and the giant was reclining near him.

"Cheer up, my brave fellow," said the giant, in jovial tones, "and my word on it the captain will bring us good tidings soon."

"Do you think that he will penetrate into the English camp, then?" asked the young man, rousing himself with an effort.

"Yes, and into Dublin, if needs be, to find the young lady. The captain can travel to places that would be death to you or I."

"I blame myself for not going on the perilous mission with him."

"You would only be in the way, I can assure you, rash youth. Ah! here comes our noble captain now. What news, captain?"

Barney of the Bow entered the tent at the moment, and De Courcey arose to greet him.

"Bad news and good," answered the outlaw, in cheerful tones. "The bad news is that the young lady is a prisoner in the English camp, and the good is that we must set to work to rescue her."

"How can that be effected?" asked young De Courcey, in eager tones.

"I will lead the way. Well, Fingal, are you strong enough for a march?"

"Yes, and for a hundred miles, if it needs be, captain."

"Then pick out about twenty of our best fellows, and have them ready for the road, while I devour some food. You will accompany us, of course, brave De Courcey?"

"That I will! Was it the rascally Danes who bore the lady to the English camp?"

"I think as much. How they crossed the river I cannot imagine, unless they constructed a raft. If they should have discovered the ford below the cottage we'll soon have the English over at us."

"Do you propose to cross by that ford to-night, my good friend?"

"We must, although it is a little dangerous at present."

In a very short space of time the outlaw led his party away from the camp, and they were all on foot.

Yet it did not take long for the active fellows to reach the ford below the cottage, when Captain Barney said:

"I will lead the way, and you will all follow in single file. If any one should be swept from off their footing, let him strike out for the opposite bank."

Barney of the Bow then dashed boldly into the river, followed by De Courcey, and the giant kept close behind his friend, as he said to him:

"Use your hands in the deeper water and beat downward. Let your feet cling to the ground and slide along. Do not lose your footing."

Barney of the Bow plunged boldly on, and it required his best efforts to keep his feet, as the rapid current reached to his breast at times.

De Courcey kept bravely on also, as he cried to his friend ahead:

"There is no danger that a strong force of the enemy will pass over this path."

"If the stream falls an army may cross in a few days," rejoined Barney, "did the leaders know the ford as well as I do?"

"There goes one of our fellows," cried the giant, in loud tones, as one of the outlaws was swept down the stream.

"Be as silent and as steady as possible, good fellows," said the outlaw, "as some of the enemy's scouts may be prowling on the other side. That brave man strikes out bravely, and— Ha! these goes another down."

"And another, and another," answered the giant, as two more men were swept along. "Keep to your feet, on your life, my young friend."

"I'll follow the leader wherever he goes," answered De Courcey, merrily.

After exerting themselves in the most laborious fashion, the rest of the outlaws reached the opposite bank in safety.

Three of the unfortunates were then striking out for the shore, which they reached in safety, but the fourth outlaw was swept along in a current that had struck him.

After waiting some time, in hopes that the unfortunate man would join them, Barney of the Bow said:

"We must push back to the English camp ere it is too late. The water is falling a little now, and we can recross better."

"It is strange that they did not send the young lady back to Dublin," said De Courcey, as they journeyed along.

"Her father is a prisoner in the English camp at present, as he was taken while trying to get to Athlone."

"And do you hope to rescue the father and daughter, good friend?"

"It is possible, and we will try. Still, if we drag the maiden from their clutches, you must be satisfied."

"I will be satisfied, good captain. Her father is not my friend, still I would strike a good blow for his release."

"No danger will befall him at the hands of the English, as he has powerful friends among them. Be silent."

They were traveling through the wood, and at a signal from the leader all the outlaws halted and got their arms ready.

"What is it?" asked De Courcey of the leader in a whisper.

(To be continued.)

FROM ALL POINTS

In testing out the steel car with a view to proving its indestructibility by fire a railroad company placed in one of this type 200 pounds of shavings and wood saturated with oil, set fire to it and allowed the mass to burn itself out. The paint and upholstery were destroyed, but no damage was done to the car as a structural whole. At present 2,872 steel passenger cars are in service on this one system, and this is about one-half of the total of steel passenger cars in service in the United States.

Mrs. Clarissa A. Bailey, an Indian woman of Seattle, Wash., argued her own case before the Supreme Court, dividing her time with her attorneys. It appeared Mrs. Bailey had difficulties with her lawyers, and Chief Justice Crow departed from the usual rule and allowed her a hearing. In the past a few male litigants have presented their own cases, but never has a woman not a lawyer claimed this privilege. Mrs. Bailey is contesting assessments against her property by the city of Seattle in improvement work.

Considering the rapid growth in the importance of the German stage in recent years, both from a national and an international point of view, the figures published as the result of the latest inquiry into stage salaries in Germany cannot fail to surprise. As many as sixteen dramatic artists are recorded as earning \$2,500 or more in a season, but, on the other hand, more than half of those who answered the inquiry gave \$375 as the amount of their season's income. The table of more than 2,000 answers shows that 56 had received less than \$100. The season may be counted as eight or nine months in the year.

The most modern of Zeppelin dirigible airships, the Zeppelin VI., intended for the service of the German army, ascended from Lake Constance the other day and started on her first trip, during which she will try to reach Gotha, about 250 miles due north. Work is being pushed forward on the new naval Zeppelin which is to replace the one destroyed in the catastrophe at Johannisthal on October 17, when the entire crew of twenty-eight officers and men were killed. The airship under construction embodies all those improvements believed by experts necessary to obviate such accidents as that which caused the recent disaster.

A curious phenomenon has been witnessed at Gibraltar. Lurid coppery masses of cloud suddenly shrouded the heavens over the rock and surrounding bay, after which fell a heavy shower of rain, the color of reddish mud, leaving a pinkish stain in many parts of the town. It is conjectured that a sandstorm in the neighboring African wilds had gathered the particles into the air, and that, meeting with the humid atmosphere of Gibraltar and a drop in temperature, they fell in rain. Following the red rain a yellow rainstorm has now been experienced and vessels arriving here report having noted the same phenomenon.

Scotland still produces pearls found mainly in the fresh water mussel. They could no doubt be found in England if the industry were profitable. Cleopatra was not the only person who swallowed a dissolved pearl. Until comparatively recently they were used medicinally in the West, and still appear in the *materia medica* of China. According to one Chinese authority a pearl, after being treated with pumice stone and honeycomb, mixed with the gall of a serpent, "might be drawn out to the length of three or four feet. Make it into pills and swallow them—henceforth food will be unnecessary." The suggestion is not that the patient would be finished off, but that he would live, foodless, forever.

An appropriation of \$20,000 to exterminate jackrabbits, ground squirrels and prairie dogs in the Rocky Mountain States was introduced by Representative Smith, of Idaho, who says the rodents are playing havoc with the crops in his section. "In a recent rabbit drive in Idaho more than 18,000 rabbits were killed," says Mr. Smith, "but because of the prolific nature of the animal this slaughter has made scarcely any impression on the rabbit population." Mr. Smith suggests a systematic method of poisoning the rabbits, adding: "The jackrabbits swarm upon a field of growing grain in such numbers that they completely destroy the crop, and they are also very injurious to growing fruit trees in the newer sections of the country."

The refusal of several aeroplane manufacturers to enter their machines for the international cup competition, at Rheims, France, indicates that aerial racing is going the way of automobile racing. Designers aver that the over-engined and lightly constructed air machines built for speed do not actually advance aviation more than machines built for automobile racing alone are fit for everyday practical use. Aviation appears to-day to be entering upon a period in which study and experiment will be carried out in the direction of heavier, slower and safer machines. The effort will be to drive a heavier apparatus at a speed less dangerous than a mile a minute or more, the velocity attained by most lightweight aeroplanes of this season.

The new Japanese battle cruiser Kongo, which has just sailed from Plymouth, England, for home, is taking with her forty torpedoes of a new and secret design. These torpedoes, a 21-inch weapon officially known as the V. L., are as great an improvement upon the British admiralty's Hardcastle weapon as that torpedo was upon its cold-air predecessors. Both are propelled by heated air, but while the Hardcastle had a range of 8,000 yards, the V. L. can travel from 10,000 to 12,000 yards at a speed of 48 knots. The trials of the Japanese order were made under the personal supervision of two officers of the Kongo, and the tests were carried on with the greatest secrecy. They are said to have been highly satisfactory. In a few weeks the company manufacturing this new weapon will begin work on a large order for delivery to the United States navy.

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BRIEF BUT POINTED ITEMS

Lippe-Detmold is just having a new issue of money. The royal mint in Berlin has struck off an issue of thalers (three-mark pieces worth about 75 cents) bearing a new likeness of Prince Leopold IV. The coins will not be placed in general circulation, but collectors and others desiring them must apply to the princely treasuries or princely savings banks.

For a number of years it has been the boast of the big pork packers of the United States that they are able "to turn into money every part of the pig except the squeal." Fruit men in the grape-producing sections of the country may soon be able to make as economical a showing. The rasin-seeding industry has grown to great proportions in recent years and fruit growers have just discovered that the thousands of tons of seeds which they have wasted are rich in by-products of syrup, oil, tannin extract and meal.

As the United States cruiser South Dakota steamed in through the Golden Gate the other day Silas Christofferson, in a biplane, swept over the warship and dropped a sand "bomb" that struck the vessel squarely amidships. This was a feature of an aviation meet at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition grounds that was not on the programme. It happened that the cruiser entered the bay at the time the aviators were preparing to take part in a bomb-dropping contest at a target in the water. Christofferson with his "bomb" struck the South Dakota the first time he tried.

The little blind daughter of Rural Mail Carrier Sherry, at Mandale, O., may ride with her father over his route, although a postoffice regulation expressly forbids it, because Miss Jessie Wilson, the president's second daughter, interceded for the tot and got Postmaster-General Burleson to issue a special permit. Jessie Columbia, thirteen years old, of Cleveland, spent her vacation this year with her grandfather, the postmaster at Mandale, and saw the blind girl's plight. She wrote Miss Wilson of how little Miss Sherry longed to ride on her father's mail cart, and an appeal to the postmaster general was followed by an order waiving in this case a regulation which forbids that any one but a carrier should ride on a mail wagon.

Surgical circles are interested in an operation just performed on Miss Fannie Rubin at St. Joseph's Hospital, Baltimore. A sewing needle two inches long was removed from the girl's liver and the doctors are confident she will recover. Miss Rubin was taken ill with pains in the abdomen about ten days ago and went to the hospital, where an X-ray examination revealed a needle piercing the wall of the stomach. It was decided to allow the needle to remain temporarily in the girl's body for observation. The needle continued boring its way and finally escaped from the stomach. Another X-ray plate discovered the needle imbedded in the liver. Fearing blood poison, the surgeons decided on an immediate operation.

JOKES AND JESTS.

"What kind of a man is this John Smith?" "Oh, he's the kind that thinks he can hold on to his umbrella by having his name engraved on the handle."

Towns—"See that man? Well, sir, he landed in this country with his bare feet, and now he's got millions." Browne—"Gee whizz! He's worse than a centipede, isn't he?"

"She comes of a grand old family, I believe?" "Yes, very! An ancestor of hers was beheaded in the Tower during the reign of the fourth Edward!" "How perfectly lovely!"

She—"And pray, what do you carry that book with you for?" He—"Oh, that is a book in which I just jot down my thoughts, you see." She—"Isn't it rather large for that purpose?"

Mr. Pullemin—"I make a pad mistake mit buying dose goots. I bays too much." Little Son—"Th' teacher say we must profit by our meestakes." Mr. Pullemin—"Ish dot so? Vell, I get dem insured."

Henriques (tentatively)—"Have you got \$5 in your pocket, old fellow?" Ottinger—"Nary; this is one of those bankrupt suitings you see advertised so many times in the bargain columns, old man!"

Teacher—"As I have been telling you, there are two general classes of workers. Tommy, does your father make his living by using his brains or by using his muscle?" Tommy—"Neither one, ma'am. He's a policeman."

Gilligo—"Oi hear that yez hov some moighty hoigh buildin's in Noo York, Pat. Are they as hoigh as folks say they are?" O'Hoolahan—"Hoigh buildin's! Fax, we hov some with cellars four stories hoigh down into the ground!"

The Rev. Fourthly—"Miss Melicent, some persons have—er—complained that the ends of my sermons are—er—too long drawn out." Melicent (earnestly)—"They have? Why, Doctor, I assure you, I always listen most eagerly for the end."

THE TELL-TALE NOTCHES.

By Paul Braddon.

A little more than twenty-five years ago, a prominent merchant of the city of W——, in the far-famed Wyoming Valley, made classic in history and song, was found murdered in a copse of woods just west of the bridge that crosses the Susquehanna.

The discovery threw the community into the wildest excitement.

The body was found in some thickly tangled wild growth of shrubbery near the bank of the river. For more than a hundred yards there were traces of the body having been dragged through the brush and grass, along which were bloodstains and shreds of clothing.

Evidences of a fierce struggle having taken place before the victim succumbed could be seen all around the spot where the murder occurred. The skull of the murdered man was fractured by a blow from something that must have been like a club. On the forehead was the clear imprint of a man's boot-heel.

Perhaps no crime that has been committed in that section of the State has ever awakened so much public attention or aroused greater indignation.

A few days after the startling affair, an excursion took place down the river, in which most of the young people joined.

I was among the number.

Being the son of a clergyman of the place, and pretty free and social in my ways, I was quite popular with the young ladies and gentlemen of the place.

During the trip down to what is called the Dam, a young colored boy, a servant of Judge Hollenback, came up to me, and addressing me familiarly, as he had heard others of the company do, asked:

"Jim, have you got a knife?"

"Yes, Sam," I replied.

"Will yer loan it to me? I'se want ter cut something."

"Certainly; but don't forget to return it," I quickly said, as I handed it to him, and thought no more about it in the excitement of the young company.

The day passed, and we returned to the city without me ever missing my knife till I reached home. I was too tired to go downtown that night, and concluded I would go down in the morning to Judge Hollenback's and get my knife from Sam Brown. When I met him I asked:

"Sam, where's my knife?

"Why, de judge tuk it from me this mornin'. He seed me whittlin' wid it when he cum out to de stable, an' he says, 'Sam, whar did yer git dat knife?' I tolle him dat it was Jim Burleigh's, an' as how yer loaned it to me yesterday. Den he tuk de knife and de stick I was whittlin' from me, an' walked right into de house 'widout sayin' nuthin'.

"Well, Sam, I'll break your bones for you if you don't get it for me in a day," I replied, for I felt that the young darky was trying to play a game on me, and was adopting that plan, or excuse, to defraud me of my knife.

After several more threats, we parted company, and I returned home, went to my room, where I found my room-

mate and constant companion, Dick Sanders, comfortably lounging in an arm-chair, smoking.

"Hello, Jim!" he inquired, without moving from his position, and puffing away. "Where have you been?"

"Down to Judge Hollenback's."

"Not to see Gerty, his daughter, I suppose?" quizzingly put in Dick.

"No. That confounded darky borrowed my knife yesterday, and didn't return it. He says now that the judge took it from him this morning, and didn't return it. I think he lies."

"The judge took it from him, eh? That's queer. Doesn't he allow Sam to have a knife?"

"I suppose not. He's hacking everything to pieces when he has one. I'll get that back or I'll lick him; that's certain."

"Then you'll incur the displeasure of Gerty Hollenback. Sam is her pet, you know. But, Jim," continued Dick Sanders, jumping to his feet, "you must get that knife back. You've carried it a good while, and you must prize it very highly, for old associations' sake."

"James, come down," came a voice through the hall and up the stairway. It was that of my sister, Jennie Burleigh. It was not her natural voice; it seemed filled with trembling and alarm. "Come, James, quick! You are wanted."

Immediately I descended the stairway, and was confronted by Sheriff Clark and a posse of men.

"James Burleigh," said Sheriff Clark, in a subdued and sympathetic voice, that was far removed from stern officialism, "I have a warrant for your arrest. You are suspected of having murdered James Sutherland, and it is my duty to arrest and commit you till you are brought before the Grand Jury."

For a few moments there was a perfect silence, which was at last broken by the sobs of my mother.

"My son guilty—of murder! That cannot be! No, no! Surely there is some mistake here!"

"Oh, Mr. Clark!" cried Jennie, as if her heart would break, "don't take James to prison. He is not guilty of so great a crime."

Maintaining as best I could, under the circumstances, my composure and self-possession, I tried to quiet my friends by assurances that I was innocent, and went with the officers to the county jail.

The news soon spread that the murderer of James Sutherland had been found, and the populace literally flocked from their houses into the streets, and gathered in great numbers around the jail.

"Jim Burleigh is the murderer! Jim Burleigh is the murderer!" passed from lip to lip, and was repeated with more or less vehemence as each felt inclined to believe or disbelieve.

At any rate, the excitement reached a fever point; and some threw out hints of lynching if the proof, whatever it was, seemed strong enough to mark me as the guilty person. During the days of my imprisonment following the preliminary examination before the Grand Jury, and while awaiting my trial, I had sufficient time to reflect upon the unfortunate position in which I was placed, and to detect the keen sorrow of my friends.

At first I chafed and fretted over my confinement, but

that I found was useless, so that, as the weeks rolled by, with a sort of philosophic contentment I resolved to await my trial. My hope buoyed me up, that I was only a victim of circumstances, which time might show to be the case.

When the time for the trial came, the courthouse was crowded with people.

Timid and sensitive, I shrank from the morbid gaze of people who looked upon me as a murderer.

During the trial, Judge Hollenback, who had formerly presided in that same court, was called to the witness-stand.

The prosecuting attorney asked:

"Judge Hollenback, do you recognize this knife?"

"I do."

"Where did you ever see it before?"

"In the hands of my colored servant, Samuel Brown. I saw him using it one morning, and took it and the stick he was cutting from him."

"Is this the same knife? Examine it."

Judge Hollenback took the knife and carefully examined it and said it was the same knife.

"How do you distinguish it?"

"By its general appearance, and by two notches on the large blade. It was this that attracted my attention when I first looked at it."

As Judge Hollenback stepped out of the witness stand, I could see that his evidence had made a profound sensation.

The next witness called was Samuel Brown; the colored boy.

He testified that he recognized the knife, that he had borrowed it from me on the day of the excursion; that Judge Hollenback had taken it from him.

Other witnesses were called, among them my room mate and for years constant companion, Dick Sanders.

"Mr. Sanders," asked the prosecuting attorney, "do you recognize that knife?"

"I do recognize it."

"In whose possession have you seen it?"

"In James Burleigh's."

"Have you ever seen that boot before?" holding up a boot near to the witness.

"I—I think I have," came stammeringly from the lips of Dick Sanders.

"Whose boot is it?"

"James Burleigh's," spoke Dick, in almost a solemn, sepulchral tone.

The evidence of the inquest was submitted, showing that the imprint of the heel and nails on the forehead corresponded with the heel and nail-tops on my boot that had just been shown to the court.

Finally the case was closed; the counsel presented both sides in the most eloquent manner, the judge instructed the jury, who soon retired to their room.

When the jury returned, the only word that fell upon my ears was:

"Guilty!"

It sounds to this day like a funeral knell. By some law of mental association, notwithstanding the lapse of time,

it comes to me in the night hours and startles me out of sleep.

The judge pronounced the sentence of death, and I was hurried off to a murderer's cell to await my doom.

* * * * *

"Here is the jewelry," said Detective Buzzard, as he handed down several small cases from the ceiling. It was in Dick Sanders' room in the Burleigh Mansion.

"There seems to be something more here, too," as he continued to pass down a pair of boots, suit of clothes, a gold watch and chain, and several articles of value.

"This discovery must be kept quiet for the present," whispered Detective Jacobs, who feared that someone might hear them at work.

A jewelry store had been robbed a few days before. Dick Sanders had made the place one of his most frequent haunts, on account of his intimacy with one of the clerks. For various reasons suspicion had pointed to him as the perpetrator of the deed, and Detectives Buzzard and Jacobs were put on his track.

During his absence, and without the knowledge of a single member of the Burleigh family, they had made a careful survey of his room. They found a nicely cut piece of the ceiling that could be removed, and between the ceiling and the flooring above these treasure trove were discovered.

"We must conceal all evidence of having been here," said Jacobs, "or the game may take wing before we are ready to fire."

"Yes; I think he's about ready to take wing now. There's not a moment to lose," and the two stealthily slipped out of the back way, and were lost out of sight.

Dick Sanders was an orphan. Out of love for his parents, and sympathy for the homeless boy, the Burleighs had given him a good home and education. He was a tall, handsome, and refined gentleman in appearance.

He made frequent visits to New York, Philadelphia and other cities, and always came back richly dressed and displaying evidences of wealth.

On the evening of the day that the detectives had visited the Burleigh home, there was a loud ring at the door-bell. The summons was answered by the servant, who escorted two gentlemen into the sitting-room.

"Is Richard Sanders in?" inquired Detective Buzzard.

"That is my name," said Dick, rising to his feet and advancing toward the detectives.

"You are wanted."

"Wanted! For what?"

"For murder!"

"For murder!" gasped Dick, clenching his fist.

"You can come with us. If it were not for the work of this day, an innocent man would have been hung."

* * * * *

My room mate, Dick Sanders, had taken my knife, which I did not always miss, because it frequently laid about the room; he wore a pair of my boots, as we could wear each other's boots with ease, and went out and murdered James Sutherland. The new suit of clothes, Mr. Sutherland's gold watch and chain, and other articles, were among the things discovered.

Instead of standing on the gallows prepared for me, Dick Sanders was swung into eternity from it.

GOOD READING

So great has been the rise in the price of pearls during the last fifteen years that it is estimated by a writer in the *Revue, Paris*, that a necklace bought for \$900,000 at the end of the nineteenth century might now be expected to fetch \$1,000,000. With the constant increase of wealth the value of pearls is likely to continue to increase, and a good collection may be regarded as one of the most profitable of investments.

Captain Alfred Brown, of New York, who claims the champion long-distance swimming championship of the world, swam the Gatun Lake November 22. He covered the twenty-four miles in 12 hours and 30 minutes. He started at Gatun Locks at 5:25 o'clock this morning. He finished just below Gamboa, at the entrance to Culebra cut, in good condition, and was the first man to negotiate these waters. The intention of Brown was to swim the entire length of the canal, from Cristobal to Balboa, but Colonel Goethals declined to have the lock gates opened for him. At the request of the New York American correspondent, Colonel Goethals granted permission for Brown to swim the lake.

Probably the heaviest cat in America died lately at the Episcopal Rectory in West Park, Ulster County, Kingston, N. Y. His name was Easter C. Searing, he weighed thirty pounds and was born at Scottsville, N. Y., March 30, 1902. Easter was a very docile, affectionate cat, seldom in fear of man or beast, although by no means a combative animal. He was born on Easter Sunday, and as he was the only young inmate of the rectory his letters and postals were addressed as above. He has received more epistles and packages than any other cat in the country and was as well remembered at Christmastide as other members of the family. He died in a good old age and is buried in the church grounds.

Miss Mabel Murdick, eighteen, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Sylvester Murdick, who lives on a farm near Mendham, N. J., is in a serious condition at her home as a result of a fright she received a few days ago. Her brother Harry went out with a large top basket to gather ferns to be used to decorate the dinner table. The boy gathered the ferns and went to a pond near by to spend an hour fishing, leaving the basket open. After catching a few sunfish he returned to the basket, closed it and took it home. While Miss Murdick was filling the fern dish she pulled out a large fern from the basket and from it fell a black snake. The girl screamed and swooned. She had attacks of hysteria for three days and refused to eat or drink. Her hair above her ears has turned gray. Doctors have been unable to find a successful treatment for her.

One of the few battles between swordfish recorded at Boston was witnessed by the chief refrigerator officer of the fruit steamer *Limon*. Officer Johansen says the con-

test took place near Nantucket Lightship. The first thing which drew his attention to the water was the unusual number of dead fish floating on the surface as far as he could see. A marine glass showed him a giant swordfish feeding among the floating bodies. In a few minutes a second swordfish appeared and thrust himself into the first fish's territory. Suddenly swordfish No. 1 made a vicious lunge at the intruder, and the water frothed and foamed. What Johansen could see of the fencing was wonderful, he said. The two fishes thrust and parried like duelists. The water about the fighting monsters was dyed a dark red by the blood from the sword wounds. All at once, said Johansen, what he took to be swordfish No. 1 freed itself from the fight long enough to gather itself for a blow, and, quick as a flash, it struck, running its heavy sword through the body of the enemy.

Following a fashion that seems now to be much in vogue, that of making the "smallest steam engine in the world," an American inventor has produced a horizontal engine that is truly a marvel, not only because of its diminutive size, but on account of the extreme delicacy and refinement of its parts, says *Popular Mechanics*. This engine, which is a perfect working model of a horizontal reciprocating engine, is 9-16 of an inch long and 5-16 of an inch wide over all. The diameter of the flywheel is 5-16 of an inch and that of the driving pulley 1-16 inch. Some of the parts are so minute as to be scarcely visible, and were made with the aid of a microscope and the finest of jewelers' tools. The throttle valve is a diminutive globe valve, perfect in shape and finish. While this engine is made as a steam engine, it will be impossible to run it as such, owing to the cylinder condensation of the steam, and compressed air will be used as a motive power. It has been given a rating by the inventor of "one flea power."

John Balinski, of West Warren, Conn., captured in the Quaboag River, a mile below Willimantic, a giant eel with a dog collar on its neck. The eel was forty-seven inches long, as large around the body as the wrist of an ordinary-sized man, and weighed thirteen pounds. Balinski killed the eel in low water, it evidently having been caught in the pool where it was captured when the tide went out. The collar, of the sort worn by a small dog, was securely locked about its neck, and so tight as to cause the skin to bulge out around the edge. The initials "W. R. C." and the name "Prince" were engraved on a silver nameplate. The eel's back was badly scarred, showing where it had been speared on various occasions. Four fishhooks with lines attached were found in the monster's mouth. "It was almost impossible for me to hold the eel after I grabbed it," said Balinski, "for it would twist and squirm about in my hands with ease. I finally got it between two stones, and, drawing my knife, cut its throat. About the only thing it is good for is to chop it up and feed it to the chickens. The collar I will keep as a souvenir."

ARTICLES OF ALL KINDS

RECORD SALE OF POSTAGE STAMPS.

The postmaster at Philadelphia is taking no chances of running short of postage stamps for Christmas business. He has just ordered 90,230,000 stamps, valued at \$1,696,000, the largest single order ever made by a postmaster. In July, 1912, the Chicago postmaster sent in a requisition for 71,800,000 stamps, valued at \$1,538,000, establishing a record, now broken by Philadelphia.

TREE DEEP UNDER EARTH.

An entire tree with bark in a splendid state of preservation was uncovered sixty-seven feet below the surface of the ground while workingmen were digging a shaft for a coal mine at Boone, Ia. Iowa arboriculturists have been unable to classify the wood as belonging to any tree now known. The tree, about six inches in diameter, lay squarely across the shaft and the workmen were forced to cut it in two places, the central portion only being recovered. The theory is that the tree was thrown to the ground in a pre-glacial age and was covered with water suddenly, the air being permanently shut out in this manner and decay prevented.

BALL OF HAIR IS FOUND IN STOMACH OF A WOMAN.

Without doubt one of the strangest discoveries made as the result of a surgical operation came to light when a farmer's wife, residing in the town of Poniatowski, Marathon County, Wis., submitted to an operation at St. Joseph's Hospital, Marshfield.

It was at first supposed that the invalid was suffering from a tumor, but the surgeon's knife revealed a far different ailment. A bunch of human hair weighing nearly one and a half pounds was taken from the patient's stomach. So closely was the hair matted together that it resembled a solid ball.

One of the theories advanced by physicians is that the hair was taken into the stomach by the invalid when she was in a delirium during an attack of typhoid fever quite a while ago. Another theory is that they are loosened hairs from the strands as she would hold them crossed in her mouth when dressing.

She has suffered from stomach trouble for some time, but the nature of the trouble was not suspected. She is twenty-five years old and has four children.

FOOTBALL'S TOLL, 14 DEAD.

Fourteen killed and 175 injured players comprise the levy exacted by football during the season of 1913, which practically closed November 22. This record of fatalities exceeds that of 1912, when thirteen players met death and 183 were injured.

These figures are taken from press reports, which often do not give the full number of injured. The 175 injured represent only those who were incapacitated for several

days at least. Only two college players were killed. Vernon Belyea, left halfback on the Norwich University team, was the first victim of the season. During a round end run in a game with Holy Cross on September 24, Belyea was tackled and thrown heavily to the ground. He was carried from the field and was found to have a broken spine. He died three days later.

Homer H. Wray, a student at Gettysburg College, died Friday night from the effects of an injury received in a football game between the Gettysburg and Dickinson College reserve teams at Carlisle three weeks ago. Wray's chest was hurt. Abscesses formed in the lungs and caused his death.

ENTITLED TO FORTIFY CANAL.

In connection with the discussion of the declaration a few days ago by Charles Stuart Nairne in an address in London before the Royal United Service Institution that "despite the Hay-Pauncefote treaty the world is now faced by a fortified Panama Canal," it was pointed out at Washington recently by officials interested that, while the treaty itself did not specifically give the United States the right to fortify the canal, the correspondence which passed on the subject at the time between the British and American negotiators showed most unmistakably that Great Britain conceded the right.

As originally drawn, the treaty contained a definite proviso that "no fortifications shall be erected commanding the canal or the waters adjacent." This was omitted from the final draft, however—"purposely left out," Senator Lodge declared in discussing the matter. "The omission of the prohibition of fortifications in the second treaty," he added, "was considered all-sufficient."

The fact that the United States under the treaty is called upon to maintain the neutrality of the canal in time of war as well as in time of peace, and, furthermore, the specific language of the treaty that "the United States shall be at liberty to maintain such military police along the canal as may be necessary to protect it against lawlessness and disorder," it is asserted here, make the right to fortify clear. As to large fortifications with big modern guns constituting "policing," it is argued that there can be no other proper interpretation. The "policing" could not be done without force equal to the task of maintaining neutrality against any odds.

"Now that the United States has become the practical sovereign of the canal," said Sir Edward Grey in a communication which he submitted to the American Government on the canal tolls question, "his Majesty's Government does not question its title to exercise belligerent rights for its protection." He added that "it certainly was not the intention of his Majesty's Government that any responsibility for the protection of the canal should attach to them in the future."

To date \$3,000,000 has been appropriated for the defense of the canal against naval attack and \$200,000 for land defenses.

THE GERMAN OCARINO.

A handsome metal instrument, made in Germany, from which peculiar but sweet music can be produced.

Its odd shape, which resembles a torpedo boat, will attract much attention. We send instructions with each instrument, by the aid of which anyone can in a short time play any tune and produce very sweet music on this odd-looking instrument.

Price, 10c. by mail, postpaid.

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THE GREAT FIRE EATER.

A great Sensational Trick of the Day! With the Fire Eater in his possession any person can become a perfect salamander, apparently breathing fire and ejecting thousands of brilliant sparks from his mouth, to the horror and consternation of all beholders. Harmless fun for all times, seasons and places. If you wish

to produce a decided sensation in your neighborhood don't fail to procure one. We send the Fire Eater with all the materials, in a handsome box, the cover of which is highly ornamented with illustrations in various colors. Price of all complete only 15c., or 4 boxes for 50c., mailed postpaid; one dozen by express \$1.20.

N. B.—Full printed instructions for performing the trick accompany each box, which also contains sufficient material for giving several exhibitions.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

ITCH POWDER.

Gee whiz! What fun you can have with this stuff. Moisten the tip of your finger, tap it on the contents of the box, and a little bit will stick. Then shake hands with your friend, or drop a speck down his back. In a minute he will feel as if he had the seven years' itch.

It will make him scratch, rear, squirm and make faces. But it is perfectly harmless, as it is made from the seeds of wild roses. The horrible itch stops in a few minutes, or can be checked immediately by rubbing the spot with a wet cloth. While it is working, you will be apt to laugh your suspender buttons off. The best joke of all. Price 10 cents a box, by mail, postpaid.

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SNAKES IN THE GRASS

Something entirely new, consisting of six large cones, each one nearly one inch in height. Upon lighting one of these cones with a match, you see something similar to a 4th of July exhibition of fireworks. Sparks fly in every direction, and as the cone burns down it throws out and is surrounded with what appears to be grass; at the same time a large snake uncoils himself from the burning cone and lazily stretches out in the grass, which at last burns to ashes but the snake remains as a curiosity unharmed. They are not at all dangerous and can be set off in the parlor if placed on some metal surface that will not burn. An ordinary dust pan answers the purpose nicely. Price of the six cones, packed in sawdust, in a strong wooden box, only 10c., 3 boxes for 25c., 1 dozen boxes 75c., sent by mail postpaid.

M. V. GALLIGAN, 419 W. 56th St., N. Y.

ELECTRIC PUSH BUTTON.—The base is made of maple, and the center piece of black w' inut, the whole thing abou. 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches in diameter, with a metal hook on the back so that it may be slipped over edge of the vest pocket. Expose to view your New Electric Bell, when your friend will push the button expecting to hear it ring.

As soon as he touches it, you will see some of the liveliest dancing you ever witnessed. The Electric Button is heavily charged and will give a smart shock when the button is pushed.

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HINDOO FLOWER-POT TRICK

With this trick you can make a plant grow right up in a flower-pot, before the eyes of your audience. An ordinary empty earthen flower-pot is handed to the spectators for examination. A handkerchief is then placed over it, and you repeat a few magic words, and wave your wand over it. When the handkerchief is removed there is a beautiful plant, apparently in full bloom, in the pot. Full directions with each outfit. Price, 15 cents by mail, postpaid.

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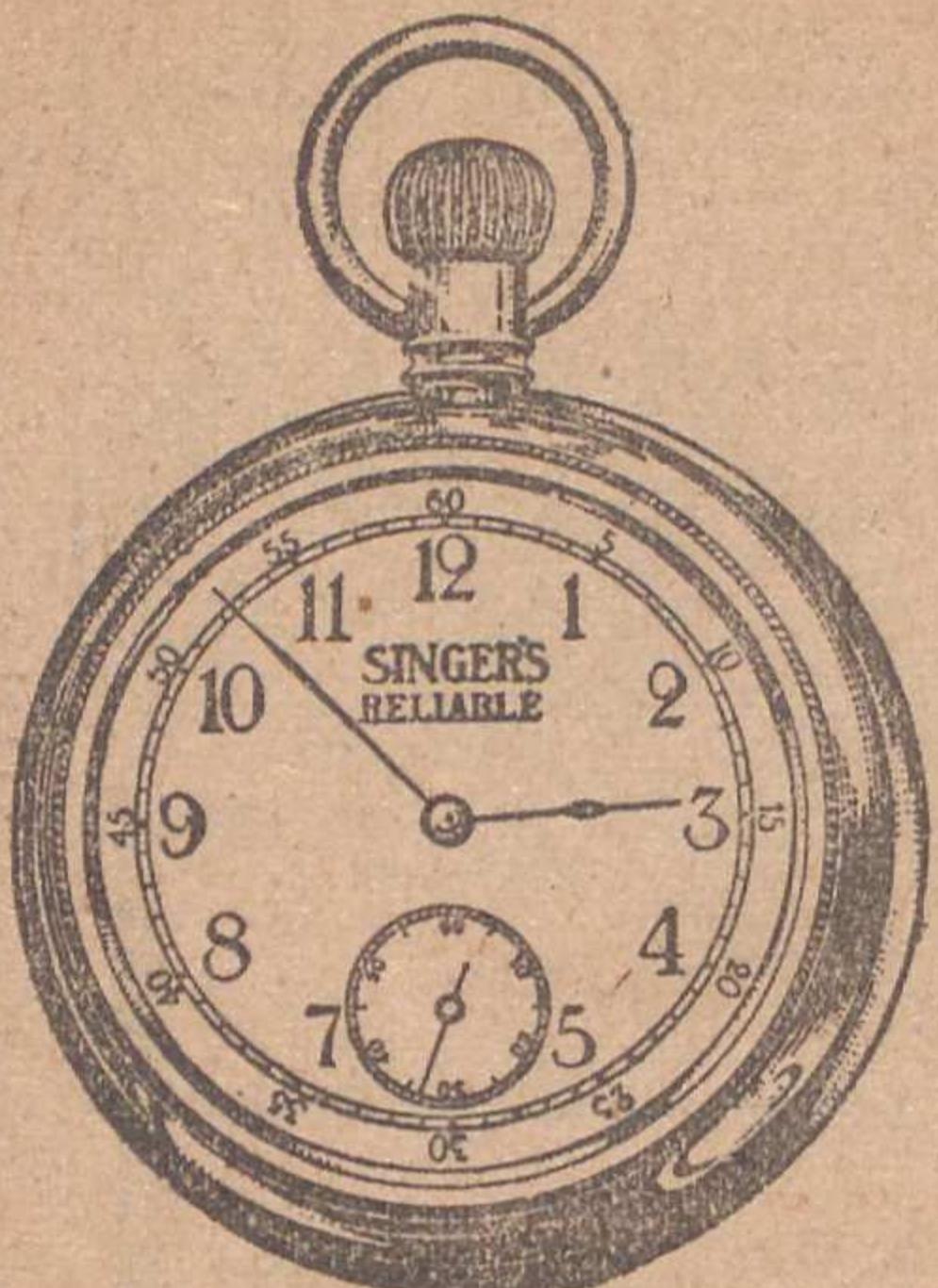


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